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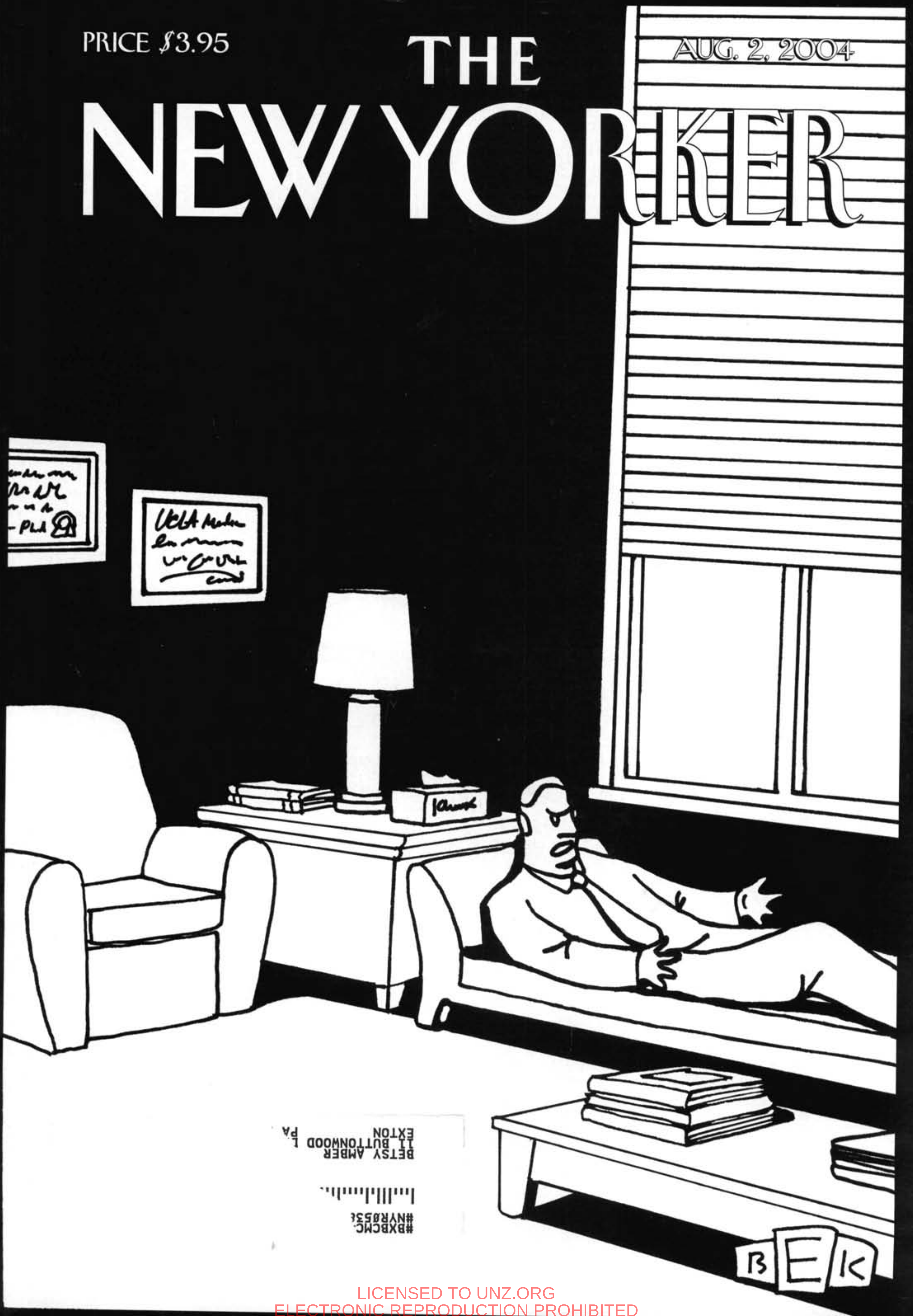
AUG. 2, 2004



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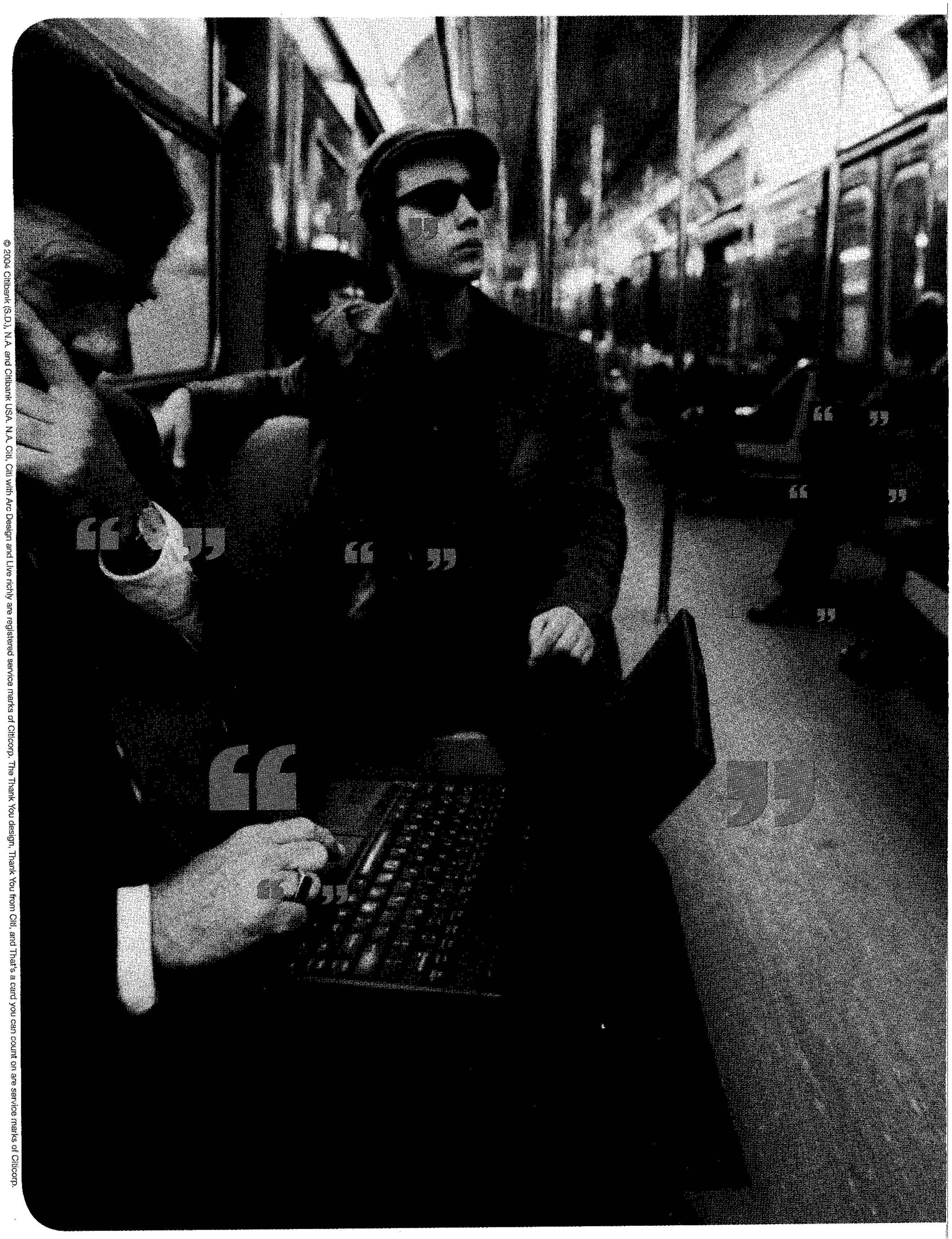

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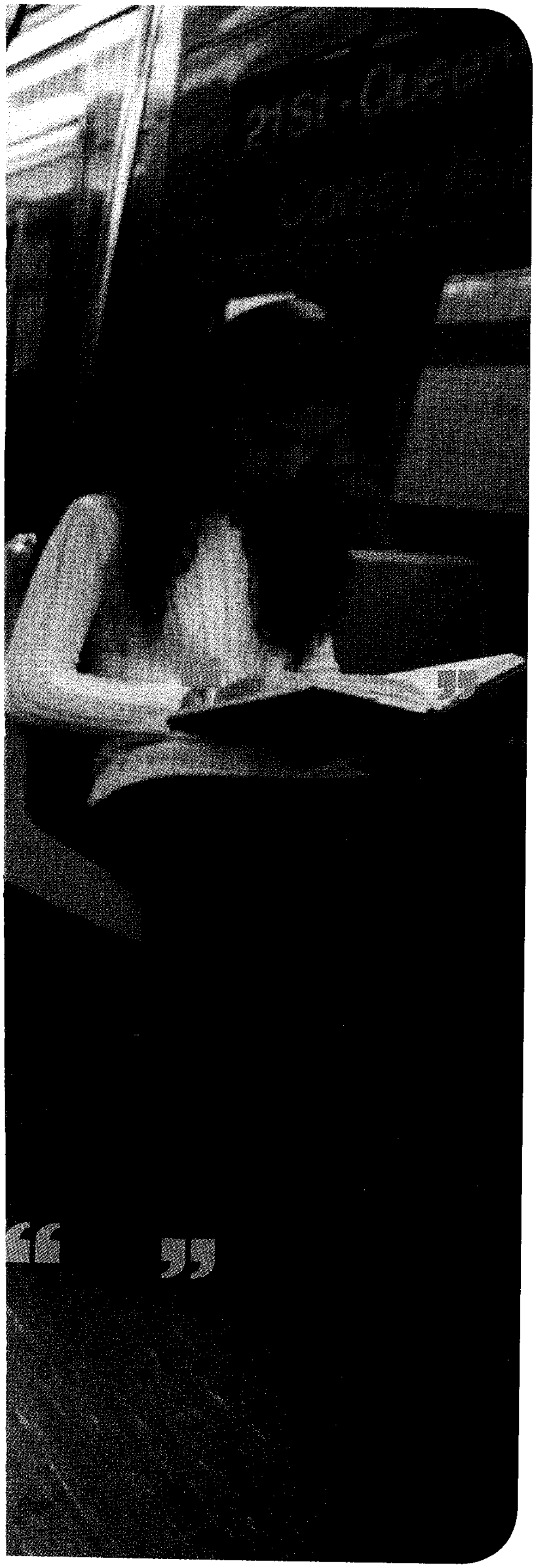

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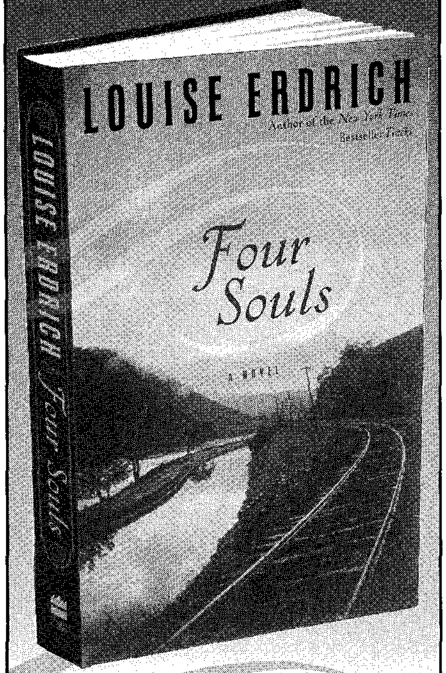
LOUISE ERDRICH
Author of the New York Times Bestseller Tracks
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A NOVEL
LOUISE ERDRICH Four Souls

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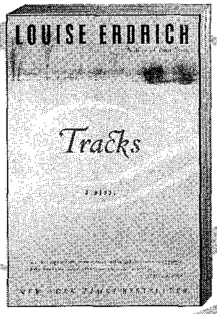

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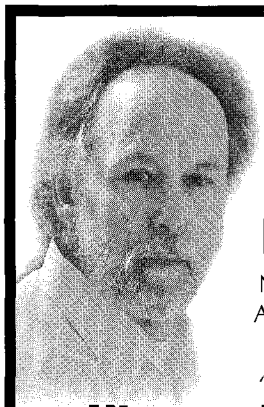

Barry Lopez

National Book Award-winning author of *Arctic Dreams*

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–Donna Seaman, *Chicago Tribune*

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–Tim McNulty, *Seattle Times*

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...A mirror reflecting the terror of our times through the integrity of men and women who choose courage over fear"
–Terry Tempest Williams

"Intimate and mysterious"
–Jeff Turrentine, *New York Times*

WHAT HAPPENS

Nine men and women—ardent, gifted, serious—have each received an ominous letter from the Office of Inland Security, warning that they might be viewed as subversive and are being watched. Each of them, before going underground, leaves a fearless account, for the pursuers to see, of his or her profoundly radicalizing experience.

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With monotypes by Alan Magee

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CONTRIBUTORS

Lawrence Wright ("The Terror Web," p. 40), the author of "Remembering Satan" and "God's Favorite: A Novel," is working on a book about the events of September 11th.

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John Cassidy ("Winners and Losers," p. 26) is a staff writer and the author of "Dot.con."

Bruce McCall (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 31) is a regular contributor. His latest humor collection is "All Meat Looks Like South America."

Zoë Heller ("Don't Call Me Sir," p. 32) is the author of the novels "Everything You Know" and "What Was She Thinking?," which is available in paperback.

Richard Ford (Fiction, p. 64) received the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1996. He is at work on a new novel, entitled "The Lay of the Land."

Ian Parker ("The Gift," p. 54) has been writing for the magazine since 1994.

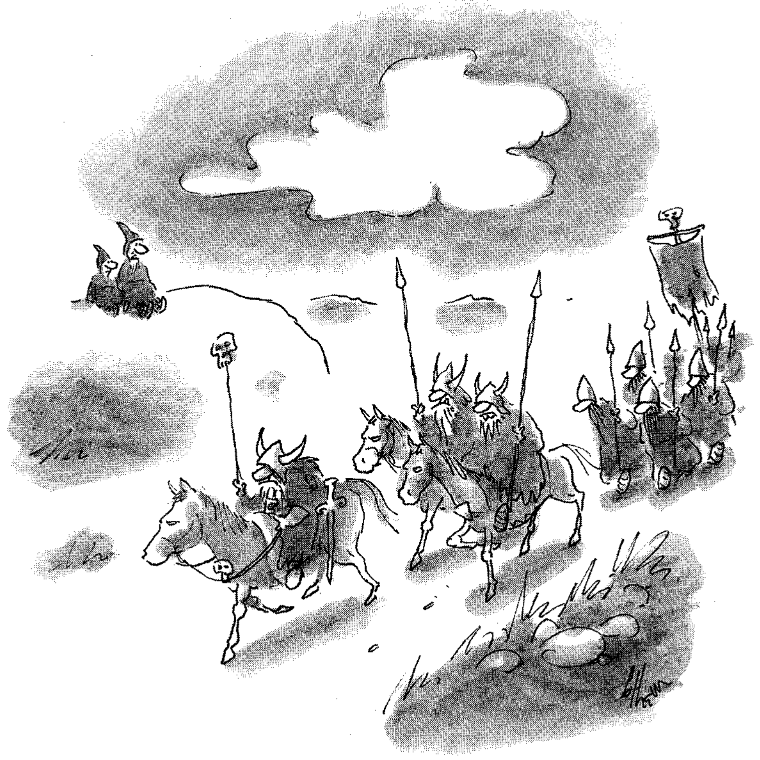
Field Maloney (The Talk of the Town, p. 24) is a member of the magazine's editorial staff.

Gary Snyder (Poem, p. 60), the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, has a collection of poems, "Danger on Peaks," coming out in September. This is his first new collection since "Axe Handles," which was published in 1983.

Hendrik Hertzberg (Books, p. 79) is a senior editor and a staff writer. His book "Politics: Observations & Arguments, 1966-2004" has just been published.

Joan Acocella (Showcase, p. 48; Dancing, p. 84) writes about books and dance for the magazine.

Paul Goldberger (The Sky Line, p. 76), the magazine's architecture critic, is the dean of the Parsons School of Design. He has a new book, "Up from Zero," coming out next month. ♦



"Their good deeds are probably underreported."

THE MAIL

WHAT SOLDIERS REMEMBER

On February 5, 1968, while serving with the U.S. Army in Vietnam, I killed a very young North Vietnamese soldier with a round fired from my M16 at close range. Dan Baum's "The Price of Valor" provided a good look into the mental spiral of those who kill in combat (July 12th & 19th). Killing an adversary removes part of your soul. Your "kill" turns out to be a young kid much like you, armed, in uniform, sent forth by his country into battle. As time passes, feelings of guilt, sorrow, and remorse accompany the odd, displaced feeling that you have become the person you killed. You see his family, you see his face, you feel his loss. You see him in your sons, and wonder if fate will someday take them from you to settle the score.

I was severely wounded later that day, and my time in Vietnam was over. I think that soldiers talk easily about their own wounds because it somehow seems to mitigate or perhaps justify the killing. It is a self-applied, if only temporary, bandage on the psychological scar that is left by killing another soldier. Families shouldn't expect "their" combat vets to discuss this with them. They won't, ever. Nonetheless, vets are proud to have served in the military of this country. I know that I am. I have no regrets.

Terry G. Schauer
Sherman Oaks, Calif.

The purpose of basic training is to make the recruit dissociate from his civilian identity—his sense of self—to become part of an effective fighting force. The enemy is killed to protect one's comrades. Baum emphasizes the psychological damage that results from killing enemy soldiers and civilians. At the V.A. hospital in Bedford, where I consult, our experience with veterans from past wars indicates that most of those suffering from post-traumatic stress are ashamed of having survived when their comrades were killed. Many are conscious of a wish to have died instead of someone who, perhaps, had a wife and child and thus better "deserved" to live. In nightmares, veterans return to a particular battle, awakening in a state of panic. We encourage them to acknowledge, through therapy, their feelings of shame, helplessness, and rage. The goal is to recognize that one cannot undo the death of others and that the dead will never entirely be left behind, and to grieve. And, with that, to go on with their lives in the here and now.

Donald Wexler
Associate Professor of Psychiatry
Boston University School of Medicine
Cambridge, Mass.

Just as it is hard for the Army to get American soldiers to kill without guilt, it is a political challenge to persuade American families to send their children off to war. This is more true when the enemy is distant and not an imminent threat. It's not surprising that the White House based its case for invading Iraq on a supposed nuclear and biological threat. Does anyone believe that parents would put their soldier-children in harm's way for some vague notions—however valid—of freedom for Iraqis, or geopolitics, or oil?

David Sadava
Pasadena, Calif.

In researching a book on duelling, I saw much the same problem that Baum identifies in soldiers. Typically, a man with an appointment at dawn to defend his honor would stay up late updating his will, praying, and writing letters to his wife and children, then go bravely forth resigned to death. When he saw his opponent sprawled out lifeless, he was usually badly shaken. He'd been ready to die but not to kill. The winners were the ones who went to pieces, saw ghosts, sweated from nightmares, and took to drink. Perhaps we're a nicer species than we think.

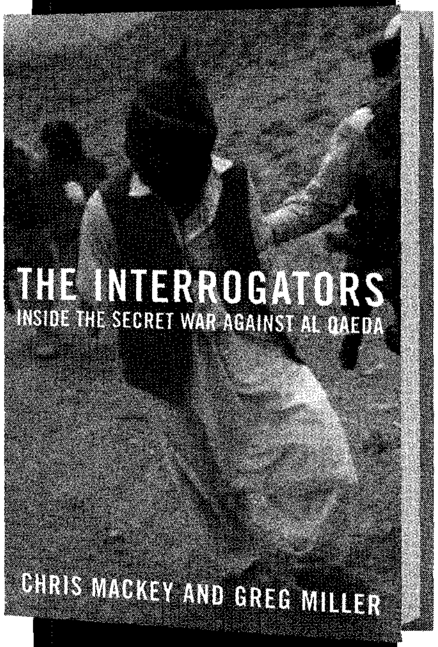
Barbara Holland
Bluemont, Va.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

INSIDE THE SECRET WAR AGAINST AL QAEDA

A U.S. Army Interrogator's True Story


THE INTERROGATORS
INSIDE THE SECRET WAR AGAINST AL QAEDA
CHRIS MACKEY AND GREG MILLER

"Provides rare insight into a process that we urgently need to understand."
—Lev Grossman, *Time*

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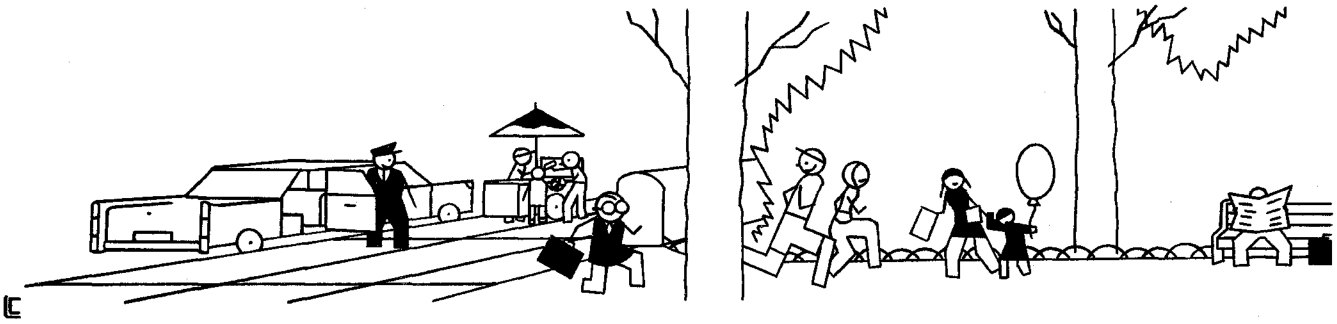

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK ON THE NOSE

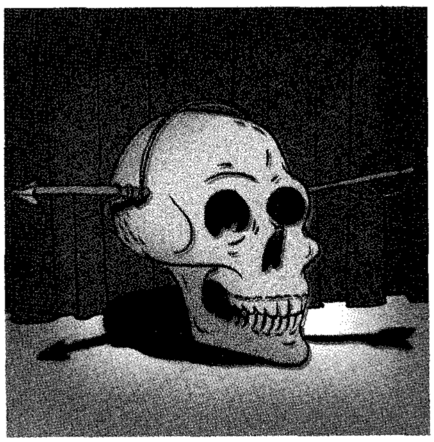
Shostakovich is the big man on campus this summer at Bard. "The Nose," the composer's first opera, is in the SummerScape series. It is the ultimate ensemble piece, with seventy-eight sung roles, and its often astringent style reflects the experimental trends racing through Russian theatre in the nineteen-twenties. (Gogol's story, which concerns a nose that detaches from the face of a civil servant, is a provocation all by itself.) The cast features Igor Tarasov, Andrei Antonov, Makvala Kasrashvili, and, in the title role (it sings), Leonid Bomstein. (Fisher Center, Bard College, beginning July 28; see Classical Music.)

FAREWELL, QUEENS

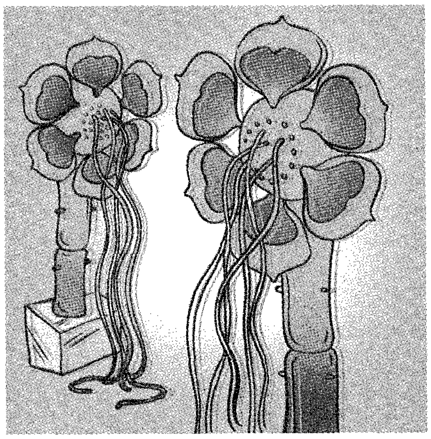
A retrospective of Lee Bontecou's drawings and sculptures is MOMA's last show in Queens before it reopens in its renovated Manhattan home. Many of Bontecou's fantastic hanging pieces are on view for the first time; their delicate splayed panels and taut arcs of bent wire make them reminiscent of insects or models of galaxies. Her drawings, which include disembodied eyes and strange, grinning fish, are equally foreign: they look like specimens from another planet. (Opens July 30; see Art.)

IMPROV NATION

Del Close may not be well known outside of comedy circles, but inside them he's a giant. Close began his career doing standup in the late fifties, spent much of the sixties with Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters, and then moved to Chicago, where he pioneered improv comedy and anchored the city's comedy scene until his death, in 1999 (he bequeathed his skull to the Goodman Theatre for use in "Hamlet"). For the last six years, the comedy troupe Upright Citizens Brigade has staged an improv marathon in Close's honor; this year's event features more than a hundred groups and will run from 5 P.M. Friday through midnight Sunday. (July 30-Aug. 1; see Above and Beyond.)



An improv-comedy marathon honors the memory of the comedian Del Close.



MOMA shows the art of Lee Bontecou before moving back to Manhattan.

ZOHAR LAZAR

Shostakovich's opera "The Nose," based on the Gogol story, at the Fisher Center.

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AFTER THE FALL
Peter Krause and Carla Gugino star in a Roundabout Theatre Company revival of the Arthur Miller play. Directed by Michael Mayer. In previews. Opens July 29 at 7:30. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

ANTIGONE
The National Asian-American Theatre Company presents Brendan Kennelly's contemporary translation of the Sophocles play, with Mia Katigbak as King Creon, and Eunice Wong in the title role. Directed by Jean Randich. Opens July 28 at 7. (Intar 53, at 508 W. 53rd St. 212-244-0447.)

THE DAY EMILY MARRIED
Estelle Parsons leads the cast in a Primary Stages production of a new play by Horton Foote about newlyweds who move in with the bride's aged parents. Directed by Michael Wilson. In previews. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

DRACULA
A new musical inspired by the Bram Stoker horror story, starring Melissa Errico and Tom Hewitt, has a book by Christopher Hampton, music by Frank Wildhorn, and lyrics by Don Black. Directed by Des McAnuff. In previews. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

GUEST FROM THE FUTURE
Bard College's Russian-themed SummerScape Festival continues with a musical about a 1945 meeting between the British philosopher Isaiah Berlin and the poet Anna Akhmatova in Leningrad. With music by Mel Marvin and a libretto by Jonathan Levi. Directed by David Chambers, with musical direction by David Levi. July 29 and July 31 at 8 and Aug. 1 at 6. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900.)

ICE FACTORY '04
The Soho Think Tank's summer festival of new works continues with "Fatboy," a three-act play about greedy world leaders, written and directed by John Clancy. July 28-31 at 7. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 14.)

I LOVE PARIS
On six consecutive Mondays, the actor Kevin Shinick channels the much publicized heiress Paris Hilton, who muses on such topics as "Split Ends: The Environmental Impact" and "Why Terrorism, Why Now?" Written by Doug Field and directed by Timothy Haskell. Opens July 26 at 8. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-868-4444.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH
A. R. Gurney's play about a Connecticut Wasp who had a compromising relationship with the current President returns to the Flea for a six-week run. Directed by Jim Simpson. Opens July 28 at 3. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

THE TRIPLE HAPPINESS
Ally Sheedy leads the cast in a new comedy by Brooke Berman about a movie star and a starry-eyed college girl who disrupt the life of a Westchester family. Directed by Michael John Garcés. Part of Second Stage Theatre's "New Plays Uptown" series. Previews begin Aug. 2. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

2004 SUMMER PLAY FESTIVAL
Eighteen works by emerging playwrights in a new festival created by the Broadway producer Arielle Tepper. Through Aug. 1. (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. See www.spfnyc.com for a full schedule.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ADDRESS UNKNOWN
An epistolary play based on the novel by Kathrine Kressmann Taylor from 1939 that explores the friendship between a German Jewish art collector in San Francisco, Max Eisenstein (Jim Dale), and his business partner, Martin Schulse (William Atherton), who has returned to Germany. The play is well crafted, but the stiff staging constrains the performances; Max and Martin narrate their letters from opposite ends of a broad, oblong table, which is meant to indicate the ocean and the emotional gulf between them but also weakens their connection. Frank Dunlop directs. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

BUG
As written by Tracy Letts and directed by Dexter Bullard, this play is never exactly what it seems. It begins deceptively simply, in a residential hotel somewhere near Oklahoma City. Agnes White (the incomparable Shannon Cochran), who works as a bartender, stands at the door to her small, dingy room. Before long, a friend shows up with a little distraction—a guy named Peter Evans (Michael Shannon), who seems to want to hang out. Scenes of casual surrealism culminate, in the second half of the play, in acts of physical and emotional violence that do more than shock: they arouse both pity and despair. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/17/04.) (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.)

DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID
Octave Mirbeau's 1900 satire about a maid and her master is the first production of the new Off Broadway company Dramahaus. Adapted and directed by Adrian Giurgea. (Walkerspace, 46 Walker St., between Broadway and Church St. 212-868-4444.)

ECHOES OF THE WAR
Two fine one-act plays by J. M. Barrie, written during the First World War, show emotions on the home front. In the first, "The New Word," starring Richard Easton and Aaron Krohn, a diffident father and son say their goodbyes. In the second, "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," Frances Sternhagen, playing a timid Scottish char who longs for a visit from her son, and Gareth Saxe, as the brusque, handsome son, both give brilliant performances. Directed by Eleanor Reissa. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

FICTION
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a new play by Steven Dietz, in which a married couple suffer the consequences of reading each other's journals. With Emily Bergl, Tom Irwin, and Julie White. Directed by David Warren. (Roundabout, Laura Pels Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE FROGS
Lincoln Center Theatre inaugurates its twentieth season with an expanded production of Stephen Sondheim and Burt Shevelove's musical from 1974, based on the Aristophanes comedy. With a new book by Nathan Lane, who plays the lead, Dionysos, and six new songs by Sondheim. Directed and choreographed by Susan Stroman, with sets by Giles Cadle and costumes by William Ivey Long. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

FROM MY HOMETOWN
Kevin R. Free, André Garner, and Rodney Hicks play R. & B. stars who reminisce about their ascent to the Apollo stage in a musical evening that features eight original songs and twenty-four R. & B. and soul hits. Directed by Kevin Ramsey. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 212-307-4100.)

JUNIE B. JONES
A new musical by Marcy Heisler and Zina Goldrich, based on the popular children's books by Barbara Park, is this summer's production in the Theatreworks/USA "Free Summer Theatre" series. Directed by Peter Flynn and choreographed by Devanand Janki ("Zanna, Don't!"). (121 Christopher St. For more information, call 212-642-6754. Through Aug. 20.)

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING
The three men in the Aquila Theatre Company's adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's tale do a bang-up job. Richard Willis, playing Peachey Carnehan—one of a pair of down-and-outers who want to become kings of a primitive land—exhibits the same scrappy charm that Michael Caine gave the role in John Huston's 1975 film

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WEB EXCLUSIVE
Lawrence Wright talks about how terrorists use the Internet.

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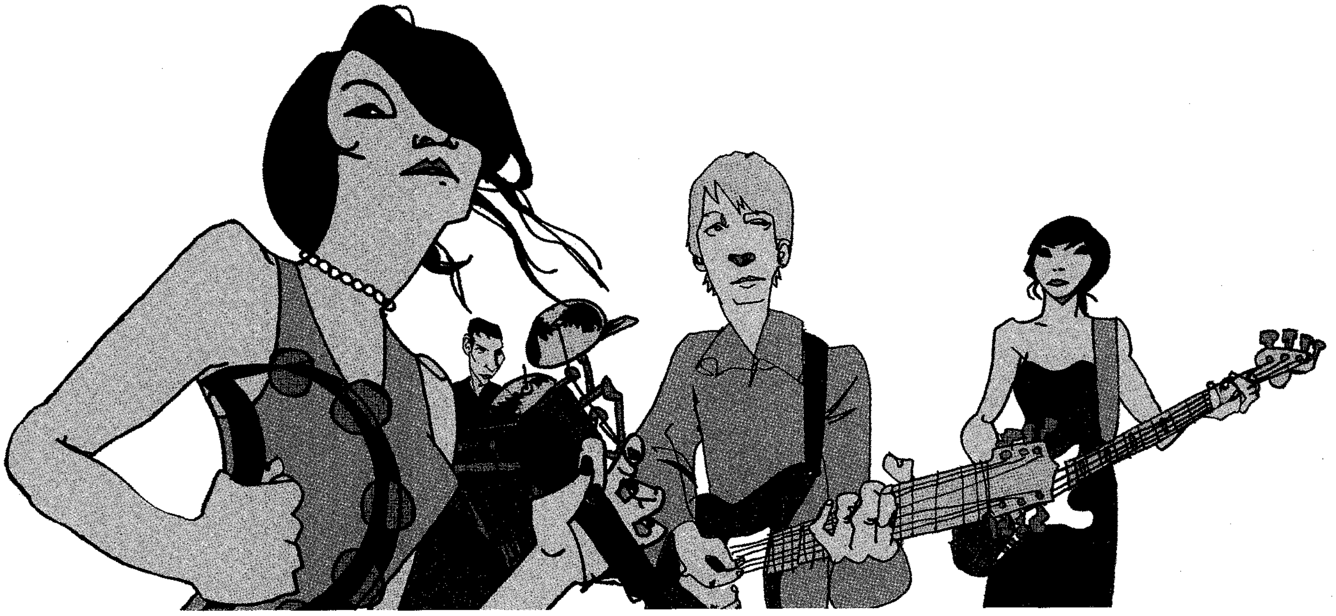
A decade of New Yorker Film Notes.

A calendar of New Yorker events across the country.

version; Anthony Cochrane, while no Sean Connery, is well cast as his pal, the lusty Scotsman Daniel Dravot; and Louis Butelli switches nimbly between the roles of a rheumy Kipling and a cringing native batman. But, alas, the play can't match the sweep and ambition of the film. Directed by Robert Richmond. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 25th St. between Lexington and Third Aves. 212-239-6200.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
The idiosyncratic, perpetually boyish, and unequivocally American actor Sam Waterston gives the performance of his career as the alternately loving, baffled, and furious patriarch Leonato in Shakespeare's play. The governor of Messina, on the island of Sicily, Leonato is also the father of Hero (played by Waterston's own daughter, the lovely Elisabeth Waterston) and the guardian of Beatrice, his verbally dexterous, disdainful niece (Kristen Johnston). When Hero's intended, Claudio (Lorenzo Pisoni), accuses her of infidelity, Leonato's love for his daughter turns to cold gray ash. It is almost unbearable to watch his Lear-like wrath fall on its passive, defenseless victim. But Waterston lends pathos to Leonato's disgust, transforming Shakespeare's rage into an aria about the shattering of a dream. Meanwhile, in the comic part of the comedy, Jimmy Smits is all bluster and testosterone as Beatrice's reluctant suitor, Benedick—a baby with chest hair. Pound for pound, Johnston matches Smits in broadness of effect—she's Tallulah Bankhead by way of Betty Hutton—but like her co-star, she has been directed to play nearly everything for laughs. She is fortunate to be playing alongside Waterston, whose intention is not only to entertain but to explain words, great and small, by illustrating them with his body. Directed by David Esbjornson. (7/26/04) (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)



The Glasgow-based Sons and Daughters play songs from their album, "Love the Cup," at Joe's Pub (see Night Life).

JASHAR AWAN

PICON PIE
The life of the Yiddish-theatre actress Molly Picon, who was nominated for an Oscar for her performance as Frank Sinatra's mother in "Come Blow Your Horn," is revisited in a play with music by Rose Leiman Goldemberg, starring Barbara Minkus and Stuart Zagnit. Directed by Pamela Hall. (DR2 Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

SQUEEZE BOX
A one-woman comedy, written and performed by Ann Randolph, about a woman who works in a homeless shelter and falls in love with an accordionist. Directed by Alan Bailey. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

ALSO PLAYING

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BOMBAY DREAMS
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.

THE BOY FROM OZ
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BRIDGE AND TUNNEL
45 Bleecker Street Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

"BALANCHINE TRIBUTE"
Principals and soloists from American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem perform two all-Balanchine evenings at the Central Park SummerStage. The program includes excerpts from "Stars & Stripes," "Agon," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Apollo," and "Who Cares?" (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. For more information, see www.summerstage.org. July 27-28 at 8:30.)

"BOCCATANGO"
Julio Bocca, a star of American Ballet Theatre, brings the smoldering energy of his Ballet Argentino to the Joyce in a program of tangos, both traditional and new, choreographed by Ana Maria Stekelman. Featuring the eight-piece orchestra Octango, playing works by Astor Piazzolla, Carlos Gardel, and others. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 26-30 and Aug. 2-3 at 8 and July 31 at 2 and 8. Through Aug. 14.)

"FOREVER TANGO"
Luis Bravo's evening of Argentine dance played on Broadway for a year and has toured five continents. In honor of the show's tenth anniversary, the production comes to the Shubert for a six-week run, with fourteen dancers and an eleven-piece orchestra. (225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. July 27, July 29-30, and Aug. 3 at 8; July 28 and July 31 at 2 and 8; and Aug. 1 at 3. Through Aug. 29.)

INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL—NYC
Among this week's highlights are two appearances by Kuei-chuan's Assembly Dance Theatre of Taiwan, presenting "East Meeting," a performance that blends Taiwanese and modern dance traditions, on Aug. 4 at 4 and 8. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. July 26 and July 29-30 at 8; July 27 at 4 and 7; July 28 and Aug. 2-3 at 4 and 8; July 31 at 1, 4, and 8; and Aug. 1 from noon to 4. For a full list of performers and venues, see www.internationaldancefestival.org. Through Aug. 15.)

UNIVERSAL BALLET OF KOREA
Korea's foremost classical company is a strange but formidable hybrid. Founded in 1984 with support from the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, it has been led since 1998 by Oleg Vinogradov, the former artistic director of the Kirov. In the company's fourth visit to this country in five years, Vinogradov presents the New York première of his 2002 production of "Romeo and Juliet." A sixty-piece orchestra accompanies the hundred-member troupe, playing Prokofiev's sublime score. With sets by Simon Pastukh and costumes by Galina Solovyeva. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-307-4100. July 30 at 8 and July 31 at 2 and 8.)

"SILK AND UME BLOSSOMING"
Michiyo Sato, a Tokyo-based choreographer, presents two story dances that mix traditional Japanese movement and costumes with the flowing, expressive style of Isadora Duncan. The all-female ensemble piece "The Plum Tree Is in Bloom" recounts the life of Ume Tsuda, a Japanese woman who was sent to the United States and brought the assertive, independent spirit of American women

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back to Japan. In the metaphorical solo "Silk Mother," Sato portrays both the self-sacrifice of a teen-age silk worker and the agony of a silkworm being boiled in water. Both pieces feature original music by Carman Moore. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-431-9233. July 29-Aug. 1 at 8.)

PALISSIMO

The Slovak choreographer Pavel Zustiak formed Palissimo two years ago. Last fall, its steamy show "Blind Spot" played at Chashama and was selected to appear in the American Living Room Festival, now running at HERE. (145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444. July 30-31 at 8:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL

Tel Aviv's Batsheva Dance Company comes to the Pillow's main stage with "Deca Dance," an electrifying montage of excerpts from works by the group's resident choreographer, Ohad Naharin. The pieces fuse Brechtian theatre and Israeli cultural allusions with the stylings of Martha Graham (who presided over the group's creation, in 1964). The program also features "Love," set to electronic and club music, an ensemble piece by the company dancer and choreographer Sharon Eyal—her first work to be seen in this country. In the smaller Doris Duke Theatre, the San Francisco company Robert Moses' Kin offers precise, kinetic dances set to music by Philip Glass and to spoken-word excerpts from the 1961 radio program "The Negro in American Culture." Batsheva Dance Company: July 28-30 at 8, July 31 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 1 at 2. Robert Moses' Kin: July 29-30 at 8:15, July 31 at 2:15 and 8:15, and Aug. 1 at 5. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

THE BAD PLUS

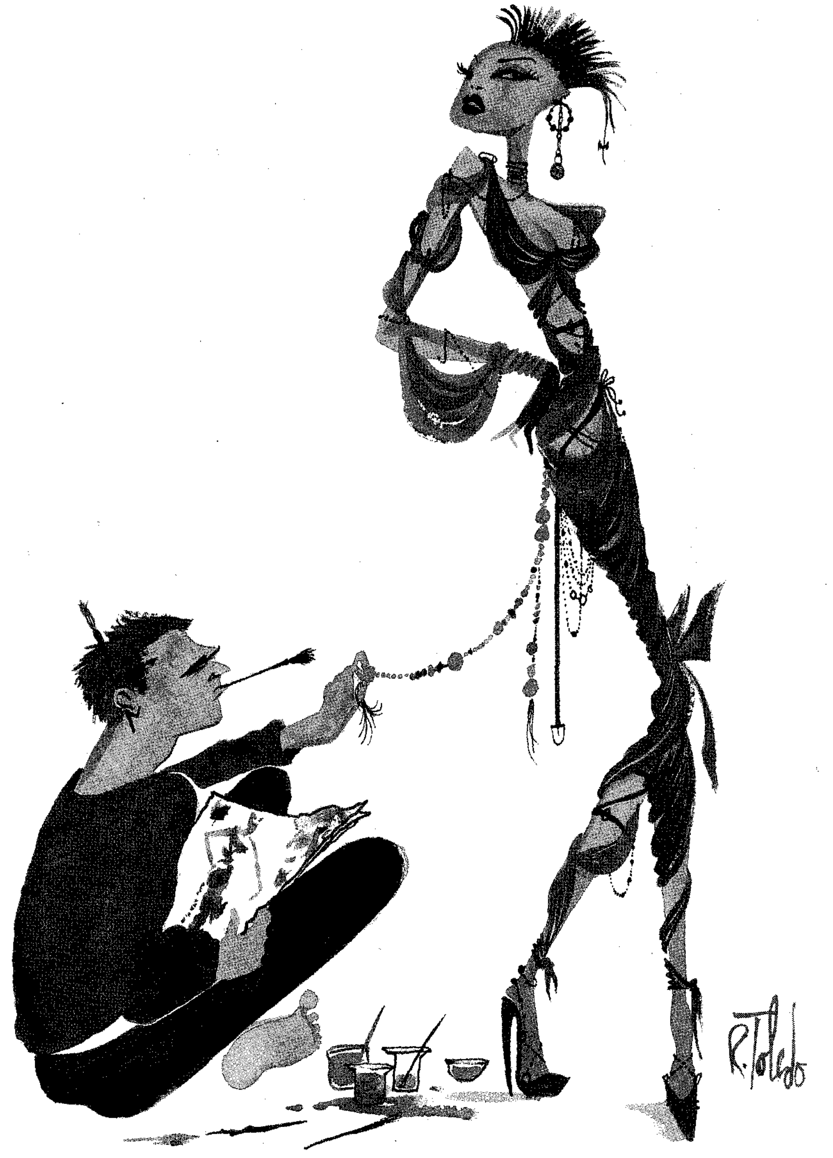
This jazz trio covers Blondie and Nirvana and performs brainy originals and occasional pieces of sonic surrealism. The pianist Ethan Iverson, the bassist Reid Anderson, and the drummer Dave King have more than enough musicianship to back up their tradition-bucking swagger. The opening band is the **Mosquitos,** who play summery pop. (Pier 17, South Street Seaport. 212-732-7678. July 28 at 6:30.)

JPMORGAN CHASE LATINO CULTURAL FESTIVAL

From July 28 to Aug. 8, Queens Theatre in the Park is home to music and dance from Spain and Latin America. (Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens. For more information, call 718-760-0064 or see www.queenstheatre.org.)

"JAZZ IN JULY"

July 28 at 8: **Dick Hyman** and **Derek Smith** present their annual piano party. July 29 at 8: A tribute to Thomas (Fats) Waller, with the stride pianist **Mike Lipskin,** the guitarist and vocalist **Marty Grosz,** and others. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)


"The Artful Line: Drawings and Prints from F.I.T.'s Special Collections" (see Art).

"THE SPIRIT OF DJANGO REINHARDT"

The great French jazz guitarist is serenaded by the Gypsy guitarists **Stochelo Rosenberg** and **Dorado Schmitt,** the Hungarian violinist **Roby Lakatos,** the Parisian accordionist **Ludovic Beier,** and **Brian Torff,** a bassist who has worked with Stéphane Grappelli, Reinhardt's Hot Club partner. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. July 28 at 7.)

TIERNEY SUTTON AND CURTIS STIGERS

Sutton's recent album, "Dancing in the Dark," is a homage to Frank Sinatra. It's a dangerous undertaking, but she finds her own way into the Chairman of the Board's material. A few years ago, Stigers, a pleasant enough vocal stylist who also plays an agreeable sax, went from singing pop to singing jazz. (Rockefeller Park, Battery Park City. 212-528-4545. July 28 at 7.)

CECIL TAYLOR

If anyone can rattle the stones of Castle Clinton it's Taylor, whose piano playing is a force of nature. And the penetrating lyricism of his quieter moments gets more profound each year. (Battery Park. July 29 at 7. Free tickets, which are required, will be distributed at 5. For more information, call 212-835-2789.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE

July 30 at 6: You can't keep brothers apart. In the mid-seventies, the New Zealand singer-songwriter **Neil Finn** joined Split Enz, the seminal New Wave band led by his older brother, **Tim.** A decade later, Tim joined Crowded House, Neil's hit band, and, several solo albums later, the Finn Brothers are back as a duo. **Martin Sexton** opens the show. July 31 at 3: Icelandic rock and funk with the bands **Vinyl** and **Jagúar.** (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

"CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!"

July 30 at 7:30: After playing around with children's music for the past few years, **They Might Be Giants** return to their skewed roots with "The Spine," their first proper rock album since 2001. With the accordion rocker **Corn Mo.** July 31 from 2 to 9:30: A Boricua festival with **N'Klabe, Larry Harlow's Latin Legends,** and **Plena Libre.** (Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

CURIOSA FESTIVAL

With a back catalogue that ranges from euphoric pop to dismal dirge rock, the **Cure** has outlived more trends than can be counted. The dark muse of the front man, Robert Smith, has proved to be consistently popular. And they have a new, self-titled album. The masters are supported by the **Rapture, Interpol, Mogwai,** and other hopeful apprentices. (Randall's Island. 212-307-7171. July 31 at 4:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS

376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—July 30: **Bebe Eiffel** performs Colombian cumbia songs with mostly French lyrics.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—July 28: **Sonia Dada,** a nine-piece band from Chicago, has made a career of mixing roots rock, R. & B., soul, and other genres. Aug. 1: The **Zen Tricksters** celebrate Jerry Garcia's birthday.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—July 28: In the early nineties, **Everlast** led the white hip-hop trio House of Pain, but he's since abandoned thuggish braggadocio for earnest, bluesy introspection. July 31: **Dave Alvin,** the former heart and soul of L.A.'s early-eighties roots-rock pioneers the Blasters, stops by with his band the Guilty Men.

THE DELANCEY

168 Delancey St. (212-254-9920)—July 29: **Tommy Stinson** cemented his place in the pantheon of rock

RUBEN TOLEDO

POP NOTES

TRUE SOUTH

For years, Alabama's Drive-By Truckers have been playing a brand of heavy Southern rock inspired by groups like the Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd. They perfected the formula on their last two records: the first, an ambitious double-disk concept record about the rise and fall of a Skynyrd-like band ("Southern Rock Opera," from 2001); the second, a relatively lean set of songs that many critics hailed as one of the best records of last year ("Decoration Day").

The band's new record, **"The Dirty South"** (New West), is clearly kin to its predecessors, right down to the Wes Freed painting on the cover, the tangle of multiple guitars, and the lyrical matter: the songs teem with sin and honor, with outlaws and churches and pretty girls and prodigal fathers and plenty of drinking. But it's also an evolution. Patterson Hood, the Truckers' lead singer, began as their primary songwriter. Over time, his songs have come to alternate with contributions from the band members Mike Cooley and Jason Isbell. Cooley's "Where the Devil Don't Stay" is equal parts sentimental hokum and bona-fide regional portraiture; Isbell's "Goddamn Lonely Love" is a beautiful, heartbroken ballad. Hood can be counted on, as usual, for historical perspective: there's a Greatest Generation tribute, "The Sands of Iwo Jima," sung in a strained falsetto, and two songs, "The Buford Stick" and "The Boys from Alabama," that puncture the reputation of the tough-talking Tennessee sheriff Buford Pusser.

In a way, the Truckers are the most self-conscious of Southern rock bands. Southern rock is not only their stock-in-trade and their talent but their subject. "Carl Perkins' Cadillac" revisits the early days of Sun Records, complete with Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Sam Phillips, and manages to be both jaunty (in its arrangement) and poignant (in the vocals). "Danko/Manuel," a tribute to the brilliant careers and sad ends of the Band's bassist and pianist, respectively, is simply poignant. Throughout the record, the band does its influences proud and continues its admirable, ambitious project of keeping Southern rock real without destroying its mythic qualities.

—*Ben Greenman*

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greatness with his antics two decades ago in the Replacements. In 1998 he joined Guns N' Roses, the troubled hard-rock group led by Axl Rose, who continues to alienate musicians and to futz with the band's new album, "Chinese Democracy." Not one to wait around, Stinson recently completed a solo album, "Village Gorilla Head," and embarked on a tour.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—July 28: The ethereal Brazilian singer **Cibelle** makes her first appearance in New York. Her self-titled début album is a languorous collection of down-tempo beats. Aug. 2: **Sons and Daughters**, from Glasgow, features two former associates of the melancholic Scottish outfit Arab Strap, but its new album, "Love the Cup," is mostly concerned with Johnny Cash. With **Adem**, a spinoff of the post-rock trio Fridge, which includes the bass player Adem Ilhans. Aug. 3: Live performances by the local quirk-rock favorites **Life in a Blender** became less frequent after the lead singer and songwriter, Don Ralph, decamped to Seattle last year. Fans of the band's absurdist sensibility and oddball, prop-laden spectacles will relish this show.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—July 28: The up-and-coming local power-pop group **Lola Ray**.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—July 29: The graceful melancholy of the **Pernice Brothers**.

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—July 30: The **Silent League**, led by the ex-Mercury Rev keyboardist Justin Russo, makes elegantly arranged pop and manages to squeeze eight players onto the stages of dingy rock clubs. Aug. 1: **Kevin Devine**, a mop-topped singer-songwriter who peppers his heart-rending confessions with smart wordplay.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—July 28: The Brazilian singer and guitarist **Marco Figueira.** July 30: The vocalist **Maria de Barros** was born in Dakar, Senegal, but she prefers the sensuous songs of her parents' birthplace, Cape Verde.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—July 27-28: The soulful sounds of **Jill Scott.** July 31: The Brazilian vocalist **Daúde** updates samba with slick production and contemporary club beats. Aug. 3: The former Lost Boyz member and local rapper **Mr. Cheeks.** With **Pete Rock** and **Truth Hurts.**

SPIRIT NEW YORK
530 W. 27th St. (212-268-9477)—Aug. 1: The Grammy-winning rock *en español* act **Café Tacuba** takes its name from a small restaurant in its home town, Mexico City, but don't expect an evening of mariachi. Tacuba is fluent in funk, ska, and even old-fashioned punk.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—The long-suffering post-folk songwriter **Freedy Johnston,** whose sales could never approximate his considerable accolades, drops by on July 29.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—July 28-31: The **Charles McPherson** quartet. Throw a rock these days and you'll hit a competent bebop saxophonist, but when you're in the presence of an authentic master like McPherson the style takes on new meaning and power. The blues-enriched harmonic gallops of bop still inform his most persuasive improvising.

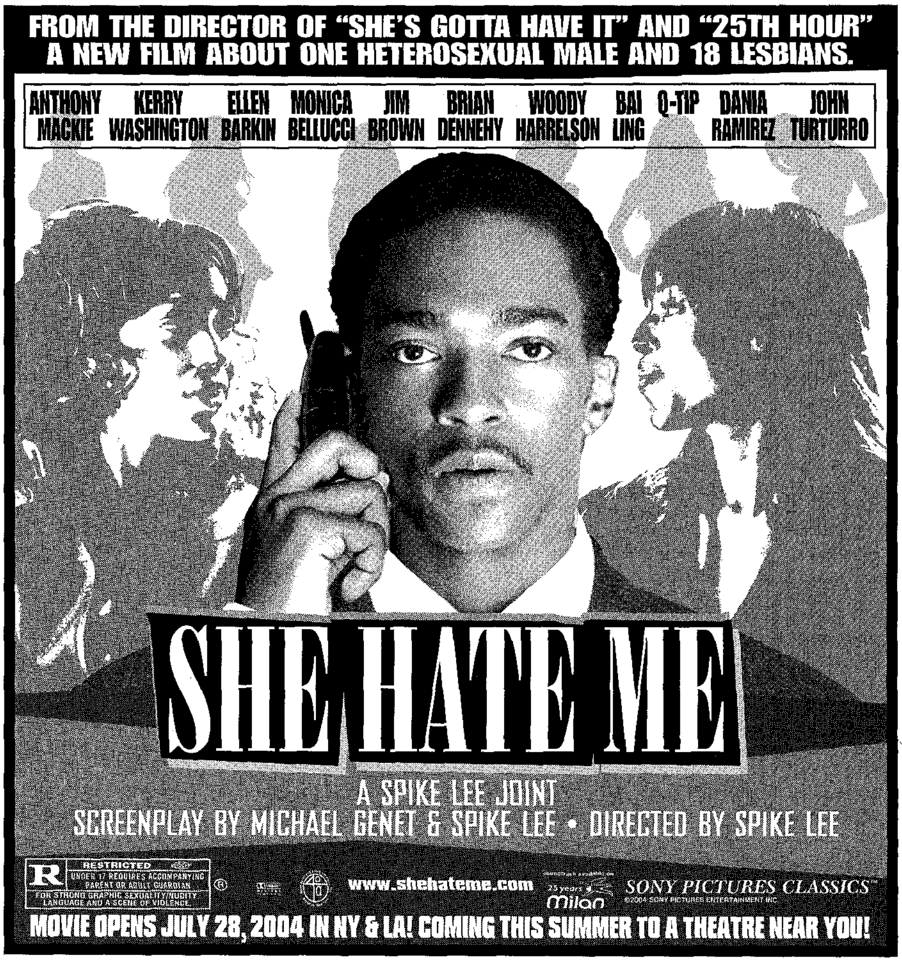
BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—July 29-Aug. 1: Catch **Jimmy Smith** on a good night and he will make you want to send all those Hammond B-3-organ enthusiasts back to the practice room.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Aug. 1: Graceful and gutsy in equal parts, the **Heath Brothers** quartet, with the bassist Percy, the saxophonist Jimmy, and the drummer Albert, is one of jazz's classic small groups. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The pianist **Bruce Barth,** who first garnered attention in the neo-con finishing school of Terence Blanchard's band, brings in a trio on July 29-30. His new East & West Septet (July 31-Aug. 1) features **Sam Newsome, Brad Leali,** and **Adam Kolker** on reeds. **Terrell Stafford** joins him on the trumpet.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—July 30-31: The tenor saxophonist **Harry Allen** has studied Stan Getz long and hard, and the results go far beyond impersonation: he catches the essence of Getz's virile poetry. Allen shares a quartet with the guitarist **Joe Cohn.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Aug. 1: **Ben Riley's Monk Legacy Septet.** A Thelonious Monk tribute band without a pianist? Trust the trumpeter, arranger, and general conceptualist **Don Sickler** to score Monk's masterpieces for four horns and a guitarist. With the Monk-band veteran Riley on the drums, swing is a given. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.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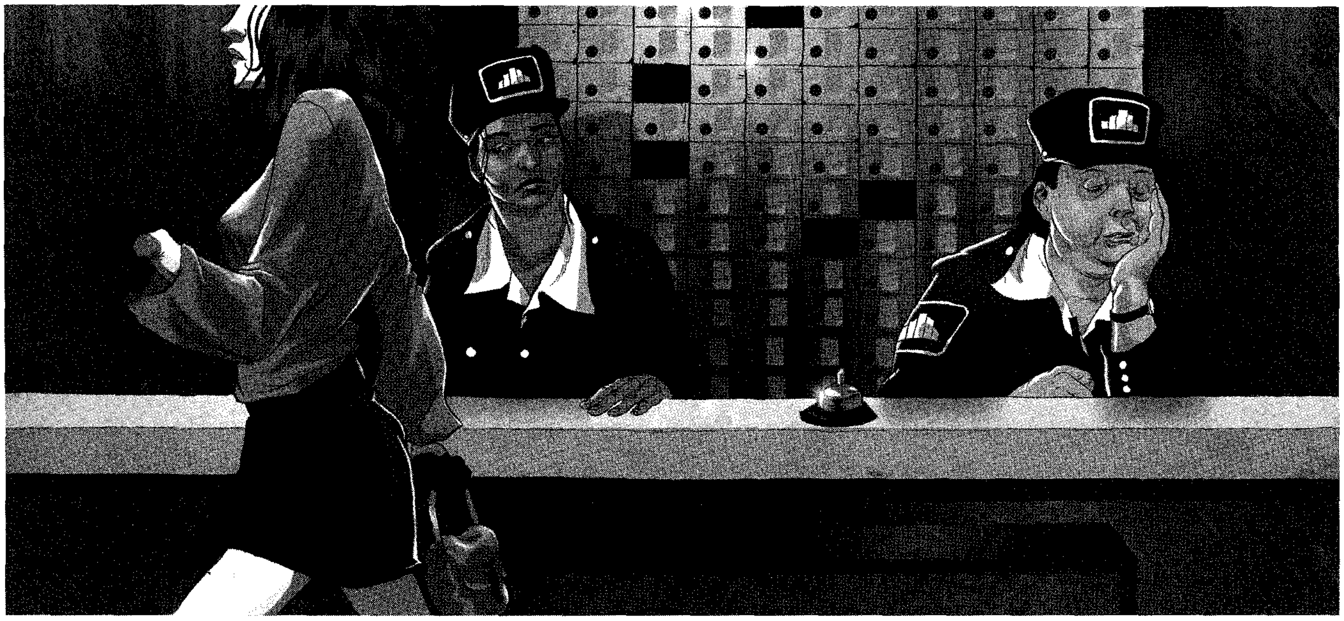
ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES



Jonah Freeman's video about a vast fictional housing complex, at Kreps through August 13 (see Art).

TOMER HANUKA

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—A couple of curators in the Costume Institute have had the marvellous idea of installing brocaded silk dresses and coats embroidered with silver thread on mannequins arranged *en conversant* in the period rooms of the Wrightsman Galleries. **"Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century"** unfolds like a racy novel, with each mirrored and panelled chamber inhabited by richly apparelled ladies and gentlemen enjoying music lessons and playing cards, knocking over vases and swooning onto sofas in pantomimed ardor. Extended through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy."** Through Aug. 15. ♦ **"Ruhlmann: Genius of Art Deco."** Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century, a Photographic Portrait of Germany."** Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Childe Hassam, American Impressionist."** Through Sept. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)

33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Lee Bontecou: A Retrospective"** opens July 30. See This Week. ♦ **"Tall Buildings,"** a state-of-the-structure review of ambitious contemporary architecture, documents twenty-five skyscrapers around the world with photographs, models, diagrams, and blueprints. Through Sept. 27. ♦ Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Constantin Brancusi: The Essence of Things."** The room of four "Bird" sculptures unfolds a staggering range of stylistic genius, from mythic poetry to Jazz Age elegance. Certain pieces are epiphanic. The all-pedestal "Caryatid" (1914 and 1926) remains radical for its union of art and furniture, and "Mlle. Pogany II" (1919) is a surprising, sublime sculpture from a dozen or so viewpoints. Through Sept. 19. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha"** and **"Ed Ruscha and Photography"** are exhilarating shows. The first tracks the forty-five-year course—"development" does not apply to a talent that hit the ground running—of Ruscha's graphic adventures with words, signs, and strange materials (gunpowder, lettuce juice). The second combines rarely seen photographs, notably a prescient group of forty-four from a sojourn in Europe in 1961, with others that relate to the artist's influential books, which are on hand to be thumbed through. Once identified with Los Angeles, Ruscha's suave sorcery is now as global as air. Through Sept. 26. ♦ **"Ana Mendieta: Earth Body Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985"** is a teeming retrospective of photographs, films, paintings, drawings, and objects from the brief career of the Cuban-born artist, who died in 1985, at the age of thirty-six. Through Sept. 19. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART

580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—The underdog story of modernism dominates most New York museums, but the Dahesh champions the slick academicism that was popular in the nineteenth century. In **"From Homer to Harem: The Art of Jean Lecomte du Nouÿ,"** pictures of Orientalist harems, drug-addled Arabs, and coy, sexy slaves are presented alongside travel sketchbooks, studies, and historical documents demonstrating Lecomte du Nouÿ's careful observation and his interest in religious and mythological subjects. Through Sept. 19. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (212-217-5800)—The Institute's archives, usually available only to students and researchers, have been raided for **"The Artful Line: Drawings and Prints from F.I.T.'s Special Collections."** Nineteenth-century fashion magazines, tailors' instruction books, and salesmen's sample books are laid out with sketches and finished drawings culled from a collection of more than a hundred thousand original works. There are costume ideas by Delaunay, oral histories from Judith Leiber and Geoffrey Beene, and a few great dresses. Through July 31. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth."** Through Sept. 19. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—The title of the cheerful garage sale of a show **"Curious Crystals of Unusual Purity"** is taken from a 1969 pop song. The intrepid organizers collected visionary drawings by the psychedelic guru Harry Smith, lyrical-curmudgeonly collages by Bruce Conner, and more than a hundred other things made from such curious and unusual substances as beeswax, chocolate, leather, nails, fake fur, sumi ink, embroidery floss, and welded steel. Through Sept. 27. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

THE SCULPTURE CENTER

44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—**"Treble,"** a wide-ranging sound-art survey, includes a series of tiny speakers embedded in a catacombish hallway by Steve Roden and a Super-8 film by Anton Vidokle and Cristian Manzutto in which the rhythms of the soundtrack manipulate the image, as well as mute objects such as Brad Tucker's geodesic dome and Joseph Beuys's "Noiseless Blackboard Eraser." Through Aug. 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

RUDOLF STINGEL

In Stingel's "Plan B," garish pink carpet emblazoned with turquoise cabbage roses transforms a portion of Grand Central Terminal, giving it the look of a casino or a hotel lobby. The insulating softness underfoot sucks up sound and turns a clattering echo chamber into a hushed, chapel-like space. Through July 29. (Vanderbilt Hall, Grand Central Terminal.)

FRANZ WEST

Lincoln Center's austere white marble façade forms a backdrop for several gawky, lacquered-aluminum outdoor sculptures, installed by the Public Art Fund. Oddly shaped but endearing, their rough assemblage conjures naïve experiments in papier-mâché. The tallest is "Dorit," four pink pompoms on a stem. "Couch" appears to be a squashed beaker lying on its side. The aqua "Ypsilon" rises up like a radioactive cactus, while "Laube" and "Double Ring" are coarsened versions of minimalist geometry. Through Aug. 31. (Lincoln Center, 65th St. at Broadway, and Doris C. Freedman Plaza, 60th St. at Fifth Ave.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

JONAH FREEMAN
A fifty-six-minute film introduces viewers to the world of the Franklin Abraham, a two-hundred-year-old rococo residence, "two miles long and, in places, over 150 stories high," that houses two million people. Apocryphal citations name Maxwell Blum, "an eccentric industrial horticulturalist," as its founder. Inhabitants range from the bored rich in the upper stories to a basement-dwelling anarchist. Posters and sculptures advertise some of the brands manufactured and consumed inside the building. LaVista soft drinks are represented by a plastic two-liter bottle with red liquid bubbling up out of it, and blowing electric fans from CoreGuy Air Circulation fill a narrow corridor with wind and noise. Through Aug. 13. (Kreps, 516A W. 20th St. 212-741-8849.)

KAREL FUNK
If a Northern Renaissance portraitist had turned his attention to college boys clad in Gore-Tex windbreakers, the result might look like the paintings of Karel Funk. Small, square, and intimate, the pictures capture just the heads of eleven well-scrubbed young white men. Their eyes are averted, their features obscured by the strangely stiff geometries of baseball caps, sun visors, hoods, collars, and headphones. Like monks piously withdrawing their attention from the world, they turn away from the viewer; the clothing's protective qualities extend beyond weatherproofing and into the realm of metaphysics. Through Aug. 12. (303, at 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

LUCY GUNNING
"Quarry," a double-screen projection, splits the viewer's attention between two videos, "Blast" and "Dr. Chris Alabaster." The first focusses on an enormous hole cut into the English countryside, its terraced rock walls periodically obscured by blasts. Choking brown dust clouds are raised by the explosions, and a warning siren screams in the background. On the other side, a geologist walks through his cluttered kitchen, where enormous pyrite crystals sit atop the water heater and gorgeous hunks of quartz and lapis clutter the counter next to tea things. Dr. Alabaster's friendly, enthusiastic description of his excavated gems is menaced by the Klaxons from the other side. Through July 30. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

"GROUND-FIELD-SURFACE"
Gestural surfaces? Paintings that address themselves to the flatness of the canvas? Pulsing fields of color luring eye and mind toward transcendence? Greenbergian formalism is alive and well in "Ground-Field-Surface," which mixes works from the heyday of Ab Ex with related experiments performed as recently as this year. A beautiful, flowerlike Lee Krasner from 1963 has unexpected resonances with a 2000/2001 terra-cotta floor panel by Xawery Wolski, while Milton Resnick's heavy, dark impastos have something almost avuncular to say to Robert Greene's fastidious, digitally inspired flicks of paint. Through Aug. 20. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

Short List

DEXTER DALWOOD
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St.
212-741-1111. Through July 30.
ANA MENDIETA
Lelong, 528 W. 26th St.
212-315-0470. Through July 30.
CARRIE WALKER
ZieherSmith, 531 W. 25th St.
212-229-1088. Through July 30.
"HAPPY ART FOR A SAD WORLD"
Spike, 547 W. 20th St.
212-627-4100. Through Aug. 31.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

SU KWAK
Kwak excavates her canvases, cutting circles and arcs into the surface and painting on the exposed wooden stretcher beneath. There's yet another surface behind the stretcher, a canvas stapled to what most artists consider the back of the painting, slathered with thick, almost crude layers of acrylic paint. The work is sculptural and sandwich-like, stuffed with edible-looking layers of paint. Through July 30. (June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 212-226-1660.)

Short List

FELIX GMELIN
Maccarone, 45 Canal St.
212-431-4977. Through July 31.
ROBERT RYMAN
Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St.
212-343-0441. Through Sept. 25.
ANDY WARHOL
Feldman, 31 Mercer St.
212-226-3232. Through July 30.
"ALTERED STATES"
Koenig, 249 Centre St.
212-334-9255. Through July 31.
"4 TEAMS 4 VISIONS: DESIGN APPROACHES TO THE HIGH LINE MASTER PLAN"
Center for Architecture, 536 LaGuardia Pl., at Bleecker St. 212-683-0023. Through Aug. 14.

TABLES FOR TWO

MAS
39 Downing St. (212-255-1790)—Mas used to be Isla, a sleek little Cuban place. It may seem unsporting to invoke the ghost of an old tenant, since most restaurants in New York were other restaurants in a previous life, but the memory of Isla (mint-clogged mojitos, mambo, and guys in guayaberas) hangs reproachfully over the pretenses of its replacement. *Mas* means farmhouse, in the argot of Provence—"Mas (farmhouse)" is printed on the menu—and so the owners, Hugh Crickmore, the former sommelier at Marseille, and Galen Zamarra, the former chef de cuisine at Bouley Bakery, have altered the space a bit to summon Verdon instead of Varadero. The bar and a few pillars are made of stacked fieldstones, the walls are planked with reclaimed barn wood, and the central table—the farm table, they call it—is often given over to communal dining. Although the acoustics evoke a jailhouse and the waitstaff calls the bar "the lounge," in most respects Mas seems as snug and tidy as you'd expect a *mas* to be.

Still, let's not kid ourselves: Mas is a place to indulge urbane, expensive tastes, and Zamarra's cuisine, which, broadly, is seasonal French-American, is scrupulous and clever in a most cosmopolitan way. A greenmarket aficionado can hold up a fiddlehead and say, "This is a fiddlehead." Some people consider it a point of honor to order certain fishy fishes, to demonstrate worldliness and pluck, but Zamarra's grilled sardines—tender and mild and served on a crumbly Parmesan cracker with caramelized onions and pine nuts—require none. A spring terrine of baby spinach, asparagus, and an assortment of other organic vegetables may look a little like the caked grass clippings that collect under a lawnmower, but it is in fact delightful. To truly taste the earth, one must try the "clay pigeon"—squab baked in a clay shell. The squab itself is rich and delicious, but the shards of clay, which arrive piled on the plate, next to the cuts of squab, taste like dirt. You are not supposed to eat them, of course. They are there for decoration. But in the heat of the moment, amid such wonderful concoctions, a diner can make mistakes. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner; 11:30 P.M.-4 A.M. for late-night menu. Entrées $25-$35.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

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OCTOBER 1•2•3

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PHOTOGRAPHY

MARIANA COOK
Ten large black-and-white abstractions that show the influence of Cook's teacher Ansel Adams: swimming-pool tiles quivering underwater, a striped vase shot from above, flowers wrapped in plastic. In Cook's hands, an eggplant could be a volcanic island seen from a plane. Through Aug. 20. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave. 212-744-7400.)

CHIP HOOPER
Using a large-format view camera, Hooper takes extraordinarily detailed photographs of the interaction between water and light along the Pacific Ocean. In some pictures the waves roil and fog blocks out the sun, creating a virtually unified field of gray. In others, the sun on still water makes a block of light that falls in a hard line into the ocean. Through Sept. 18. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)

JOSHUA LUTZ
In his first solo show, Lutz takes the "New Topographics" of Adams, Shore, and Sternfeld into the current era of urban sprawl. In one picture, mountains in the distance are squeezed out of view by the minarets, domes, and neon camels of Las Vegas's Sahara Casino. Crossed wires, scraggly trees, and a sad swing set add to the claustrophobia of a small-town Pennsylvania subdivision. Some wide-open spaces are included—an abandoned palm-tree farm in California, a huge, bizarrely fenced-in cement foundation in Westchester County—but the extra room to roam is presented with a relentless lack of sentimentality. Through Aug. 7. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY / ASIA SOCIETY
A show of recent photography and videos from China, "Between Past and Future," fills both museums with a hundred and thirty works by sixty young artists. The incredibly fast transformation of Chinese society is the central theme. Riffing on traditional Chinese scroll painting, Wang Qingsong places an officially denounced art critic at the center of his updating of the "Night Revels of Lao Li," from the tenth century. Wang Wei backlights a long line of color transparencies placed on the floor, portraits of himself underwater, forcing the viewer to walk across his face. Liu Zheng's black-and-white portraits of women mourning at a country funeral and masked revellers at a New Year's Eve party elegantly evoke the stark contrasts in the new China. Sze Tsung Leong's large color prints showing demolished traditional architecture are sad reflections on the country's manic race to build. Through Sept. 4. (International Center of Photography, 1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000; Asia Society, 725 Park Ave. 212-288-6400.)

"SIX FROM THE SEVENTIES"
More than fifty prints by six photographers whose work exemplifies many of the key artistic ideas of the nineteen-seventies. A large print on vinyl from 1977 by Bea Nettles merges oddly colored images of dinnerware and the moon with her own body, beating the postmodernists to the punch. Joel Meyerowitz's Manhattan street scenes—made with the early color dye-transfer process—combine Harry Callahan's city compositions with Philip-Lorca diCorcia's urban anomie. Frank Gohlke's tiny buildings and Michael Bishop's painted cinder blocks and billboards will speak to fans of Todd Hido and James Welling, while Michael Martone's autobiographical studies will be liked by admirers of Nan Goldin. William Larson's spare, even undercooked prints made on an early fax-like machine anticipate today's digital collages. Through July 31. (Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)

"WILD FLOWERS"
The flowers in this group show inhabit urban and emotional wilds, as in Joel Meyerowitz's photograph of a man carrying two potted plants down Forty-second Street and Gus Powell's picture of a man eating alone in a diner, at a table decorated with a soli-

tary rose. Other photographers' flowers—the floral patterns in the dresses worn in Alec Soth's "Mother and Daughter," for instance—wouldn't attract a single bee. A pair of exquisite George Tice prints and six spectacularly crisp floral studies by Chad Kleitsch provide a more lyrical approach. Through Aug. 20. (Meyerowitz, 120 Eleventh Ave. 212-414-2770.)

Short List

RUVEN AFANADOR
Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059. Through July 31.
EZRA STOLLER
Henry Urbach Architecture, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-0974. Through July 30.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
July 29 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of maritime art and memorabilia has as much for the armchair navigator as for the genuine deckhand who's been missing that just-right synchronometer. For the former, the auction is a kind of grudge match between British and American chroniclers of the nautical scene—there are several memorable works by the nineteenth-century American painter James Edward Buttersworth, but the Continentals sail away with the prize. A series of works by the twentieth-century British painter Montague Dawson (including an oil of the famous Yankee packet Dreadnought) feature temptingly fluttering sails to make you long for the sea; Edward William Cooke's masterfully shaded painting of a Dutch pink unloading under an ominous sky makes for a powerful contrast. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CONCERTS IN TOWN

BARGEMUSIC
July 29-31 at 7:30 and Aug. 1 at 4: Olga Bloom, Bargemusic's founder and éminence grise, picks up her violin to join several junior colleagues (including the violinist Mark Peskanov and the pianist Steven Beck) for a program of chamber-orchestra works by Vivaldi, Bach (the Double Concerto in D Minor), Mozart (the Piano Concerto in E-Flat Major, K. 441), and Tchaikovsky. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)
MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL
July 29 at 7:30: Louis Langrée begins his second season as the festival's music director with a free, all-Mozart preview concert featuring the Symphony No. 41 in C Major ("Jupiter"). (Tickets, which are limited to two per person, will be available at the Avery Fisher Hall box office beginning July 28 at 10.) ♦ Aug. 3-4 at 8: The mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kožená makes her Mostly Mozart début in the opening gala, another all-Mozart affair that will include not only the "Jupiter" but a collection of concert arias and the Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor (with the estimable Yefim Bronfman as soloist). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)
GOLDMAN MEMORIAL BAND
Two occasions—the hundred-and-fiftieth birthday of John Philip Sousa, and the marking of three and a half centuries of Jewish life in America—shape Christian Wilhjelm's free concerts with his fine professional group, which will include not only Sousa favorites but arrangements of music by Gershwin, Bruch (the "Kol Nidrei"), and Berlin. (Central Park Mall; enter at 72nd St. Aug. 1 at 1. ♦ Washington Square Park. Aug. 3 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

BERKSHIRE OPERA
For its final production of the summer, the company (with a cast of young singers and two-piano accompaniment) offers a classic triple bill of nineteen-

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fifties suburban anomie: Barber's **"A Hand of Bridge,"** Seymour Barab's **"A Game of Chance,"** and Bernstein's **"Trouble in Tahiti."** (Zukowski Theatre, Lee High School, Lee, Mass. 413-442-0099. July 28 and July 30 at 2 and July 31 at 8.)

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
This series picks up where the Music Festival of the Hamptons leaves off, with a clutch of top Manhattan freelancers offering classical and contemporary fare. It begins with a free outdoor concert of Bach and Vivaldi concertos (along with Pachelbel's "Canon and Gigue") performed by the violinist Colin Jacobson, the bassist Donald Palma, the flutist Marya Martin (the festival's director), and others. (Bridgehampton Historical Society. 631-537-6368. July 28 at 7.)

COOPERSTOWN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The Farmer's Museum, in Cooperstown, features a nineteenth-century-style village complete with a blacksmith shop, a schoolhouse, and a stone barn that happens to have excellent acoustics. The series, launched just last year, begins with a concert by the formidable Trio Solisti, who team up with the flutist Linda Chesis, the festival's founder, for piano trios by Haydn, Brahms, and Ravel. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 888-547-1450. July 28 at 8.)

BARD SUMMERSCAPE: "THE NOSE"
Leon Botstein conducts the American Symphony Orchestra in a production of the Shostakovich opera, based on the Gogol story (see This Week). (Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. July 30 at 8 and Aug. 1 at 2, with a preview on July 28 at 8. Through Aug. 7.)

TANGLEWOOD
July 28 at 8:30: The gentlemen of the Hilliard Ensemble lend their refined vocal colors to a selection of Renaissance works along with Stephen Hartke's "Tituli," a recent composition with a similar spiritual ambience. ♦ July 29 at 8 and July 31 at 2:30: **"A Midsummer Night's Dream"** is the most willfully obscure of Benjamin Britten's operas: the skein of the Shakespeare play conceals a complex and dangerous sexual psychodrama, painted in silvery streams of sound. Stefan Asbury conducts the young virtuosi of the Tanglewood Music Center Vocal Fellows and Orchestra in a production directed by David Kneuss. ♦ July 30 at 8:30: Edo de Waart, a conductor whose lean and firmly elegant style suits the music of Haydn, leads the Boston Symphony Orchestra (and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus) in the composer's Te Deum and "Oxford" Symphony on a program that also features Mozart's "Ave verum corpus" and Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor (with Richard Goode). ♦ July 31 at 8:30: The dashing young French violinist Renaud Capuçon performs Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, with Christoph von Dohnányi conducting the B.S.O.; music by Schnittke and Brahms (the Fourth Symphony) completes the concert. ♦ Aug. 1 at 2:30: John Williams conducts music by Copland (including "Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson," with the soprano Dawn Upshaw) and himself (the Horn Concerto, with James Sommerville). ♦ Aug. 1 at 8:30: Seiji Ozawa's twenty-nine years at the helm of the Boston Orchestra may have been a mixed blessing, but the gorgeous, wood-lined hall named in his honor ten years ago has turned out to be a jewel in every way. Ozawa and Williams conduct an anniversary concert with the T.M.C. Orchestra in which the mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, the pianist Yundi Li, the *sho* player Mayumi Miyata, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus perform music by Bernstein, Takemitsu, Copland, Chopin, and Wagner (the "Siegfried Idyll"). ♦ Aug. 3 at 8:30: "Tanglewood on Parade," a patriotic program with Williams, Dohnányi, and Keith Lockhart conducting the B.S.O., the T.M.C. Orchestra, and the Boston Pops. Fireworks follow. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
July 29 at 7:30: Schumann's Piano Trio No. 2 in F Major, the kind of hothouse flower that should be cultivated more often, leads off the Claremont Trio's program, which also includes music by Suk and Ravel. ♦ July 30 at 8: The pianist Jeffrey Swan, in the midst of a complete Beethoven cycle at Bargemusic, heads upstate for a recital with the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble that includes rare gems by Glinka and Liszt (the "Malédiction" Concerto for piano and strings) along with Franck's Piano Quintet. ♦ July 31 at 2: The Pete Malinverni Trio (featuring Leroy Williams) leads off "Generations of Jazz," the first of two all-day events in the Caramoor Jazz Festival, a mini-series on the model of the great European jazz festivals, assembled by the saxophonist Joe Lovano. The marathon concert concludes with Lovano and Frank Wess sitting in with the Hank Jones Trio, in honor of Jones's eighty-sixth birthday. ♦ Aug. 1 at 4:30: The Tokyo String Quartet, along with the flutist Carol Wincenc and the duo-pianists Misha and Cipa Dichter, offer an all-Mozart program. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
July 29 at 8, July 31 at 1:30, and Aug. 3 at 2: Handel's **"Imeneo,"** with John Tessier, Michael Maniaci, Amanda Pabyan, and Craig Phillips; William Lacey conducts. ♦ July 30 at 8 and Aug. 2 at 2: Long derided as kitsch because of its California Gold Rush milieu (Webern knew better), **"La Fanciulla del West"** is in fact the noblest of Puccini's operas, a work that speaks eloquently to the potential of ordinary people. Minnie—half barmaid, half Valkyrie—is the composer's most self-reliant heroine: she not only gets her man but rides off with him at the end. Emily Pulley, with a touch of Callas-style *squillo* in her tone, commands the role in a manner that is both measured and fierce. Her outlaw suitor, Dick Johnson, is sung with commitment by Roger Honeywell, a florid young tenor with an acting background; Earle Patriarco's skillful Jack Rance is more of a study in frustration than in menace. The conductor, Stewart Robertson, a fastidious Scotsman, leaves the passion up to Puccini, carefully tending to the score's complex orchestration and lyric flow. ♦ July 31 at 8: **"Patience,"** Gilbert and Sullivan's sendup of the airs and vapors of Oscar Wilde's aesthetic movement, with a cast that includes Sarah Coburn, Jeffrey Lentz, Kevin Burdette, and Joyce Castle; Andrew Bisantz. ♦ Aug. 1 at 2: When the world première of Stephen Hartke's "Boule de Suif" was cancelled, an opening was created for another modern work: **"The Mines of Sulphur,"** by Richard Rodney Bennett. He may be better known these days as one of New York's leading cabaret pianists, but Bennett is also a distinguished classical composer; this opera, a murder mystery set in a country house in eighteenth-century England, went on to La Scala after its successful London première in 1965. The cast includes Caroline Worra, Beth Clayton, Brandon Jovanovich, and James Maddalena; Robertson. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The clarinettist David Shifrin joins the Tokyo String Quartet for a program of music by Mozart (including the Clarinet Quintet) and Dvořák. (Routes 44 and 272, Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000. July 31 at 8.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
The pianist Pedja Muzijevic marks Janáček's hundred-and-fiftieth birthday with performances of "In the Mists" and the "Sonata '1.x.1905,'" along with music by Haydn and Mussorgsky (the original version of "Pictures at an Exhibition"). (Woodstock, N.Y. July 31 at 8. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The St. Petersburg String Quartet—Russia's preëminent chamber ensemble—settles in for the weekend. July 31 at 8: The composer-pianist Bright Sheng sits in with the group for a concert of music by Mendelssohn, Smetana, and Sheng (the String Quartet No. 4, "Silent Temple," and the Four Movements for Piano). ♦ Aug. 1 at 3: An all-Shostakovich program features the Piano Trio No. 2 in E Minor and the Piano Quintet (both with Ruth Laredo). (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

MARLBORO MUSIC FESTIVAL
The Northeast's shrine for lovers of German chamber music, performed by some of the world's leading musicians (and their very talented students). (Marlboro, Vt. July 31 at 8:30 and Aug. 1 at 2:30. For information on programs, and to purchase tickets, see www.marlboromusic.org.)

CLASSICAL NOTES

TWO TENORS

Fears of a post-Pavarotti tenor shortage are waning. The South Americans José Cura, Marcelo Álvarez, and Juan Diego Flórez, who emerged in the nineteen-nineties, have all shown staying power, and now Rolando Villazón (from Mexico) and Joseph Calleja (from Malta) look like major talents. Calleja, who is twenty-six, has been heard at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston but not yet in New York; Villazón, slightly older, débuted at the Met last fall with Renée Fleming in an erotically charged performance of "La Traviata."

Calleja's **"Tenor Arias"** (Decca), recorded with Riccardo Chailly conducting the Giuseppe Verdi Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of Milan, displays a straightforward lyric tenor in the Pavarotti mold, but the gentle sweetness of his tone harks back to a more distant figure, Beniamino Gigli (without that singer's annoying affectations). It is sheer sound, not style, that captivates us here. His liquid rendering of "La dolcissima effigie," from "Adriana Lecouvreur," hints at what Calleja's basically light voice might eventually accomplish in the verismo repertory, while his performance of Edgardo's final scene from "Lucia di Lammermoor" displays a natural gift for the more stylized emotions of bel canto.

Villazón is a far more finished artist, and his **"Italian Opera Arias"** (Virgin) a far richer experience, not least because of the conductor Marcello Viotti and the superior Munich Radio Orchestra. Villazón's singing offers a combination of intelligence and glamour not seen since the ascendancy of Domingo. In the "Lamento di Federico," from Cilea's "L'Arlesiana," colors fluctuate from vanquished grays to blazing tones of triumph; Calleja's version touchingly projects the innocence of the character, but Villazón lays out the young man's anguish in devastating detail. His move from a crisp and pointed version of "La donna è mobile" to the powerful "E lucevan le stelle" (from "Tosca") shows an easy stylistic range. There is an admirable variety in selection, too, with arias from such rarities as Donizetti's "Il Duca d'Alba" and Mascagni's "L'Amico Fritz."

—Russell Platt

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"THE DEL CLOSE IMPROV MARATHON"
More than a hundred improv troupes from around the country converge on the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre for three nights of non-stop comedy (see This Week). (307 W. 26th St. 212-366-9176. July 30-Aug. 1.)

READINGS
July 28 at 7: Jonathan Ames, Sam Brumbaugh, and Dawn Raffel read from their fiction. (Bowling Green Park, Broadway at Whitehall St. For more information, call 212-696-6609.) ♦ July 28 at 8: Kerry Sheridan reads from her new book, "Bagpipe Brothers: The FDNY Band's True Story of Tragedy, Mourning, and Recovery." (Rocky Sullivan's Pub, 129 Lexington Ave., between 28th and 29th Sts. No tickets necessary.) ♦ July 29 at 6: Leslie Schnur offers selections from her novel, "The Dog Walker." (The Corner Bookstore, Madison Ave. at 93rd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ July 29 at 7:30: Michael Cunningham, the author of "The Hours," reads from his novel "A Home at the End of the World." (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

TALK
July 28 at 7: Louis Langree, the musical director of Mostly Mozart, discusses this year's festival with Jane Moss, a vice-president of programming at Lincoln Center. (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 66th St. No tickets necessary.)

MOVIES OPENING

FESTIVAL EXPRESS
A documentary about the 1970 concert tour in which the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, the Band, and others travelled by train across Canada. Directed by Bob Smeaton. Opening July 30.

GARDEN STATE
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening July 28. (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

GOZU
Takashi Miike ("Audition") directed this surrealistic horror film about a yakuza member sent to kill his mentor. In Japanese. Opening July 30. (Cinema Village.)

HAROLD & KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE
A comedy about two friends who embark on a serendipitous, pot-laced road trip. Directed by Danny Leiner ("Dude, Where's My Car?"). With John Cho and Kal Penn. Opening July 30.

INTIMATE STRANGERS
In Patrice Leconte's romantic drama, a tax attorney (Fabrice Luchini) pretends to be a psychiatrist when a beautiful Parisian woman (Sandrine Bonnaire) shows up at his office. In French. Opening July 30. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

LOS ANGELES PLAYS ITSELF
Thom Andersen wrote and directed this near-three-hour cinematic essay about the image of Los Angeles in the movies. Opening July 28. (Film Forum.)

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
Jonathan Demme's remake of the 1962 thriller about a group of brainwashed soldiers updates the setting to the Gulf War era. With Denzel Washington, Meryl Streep, and Liev Schreiber. Opening July 30.

PROTEUS
A drama, based on true events, about an interracial homosexual relationship at a penal colony in eighteenth-century South Africa. John Greyson directed. Opening July 30. (Angelika Film Center.)

SHE HATE ME
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 28.

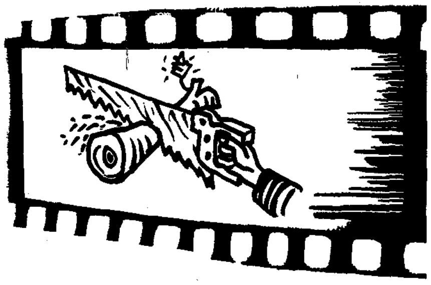
TASUMA: THE FIGHTER
Kollo Daniel Sanou directed this comedy about a retired soldier in Burkina Faso who is having trouble getting his pension. In French. Opening July 30. (Anthology Film Archives.)

THUNDERBIRDS
An action film based on the television show about an astronaut (Bill Paxton) and his five sons, who live on a remote island and perform daring rescue missions. With Ben Kingsley as the villain. Directed by Jonathan Frakes. Opening July 30.

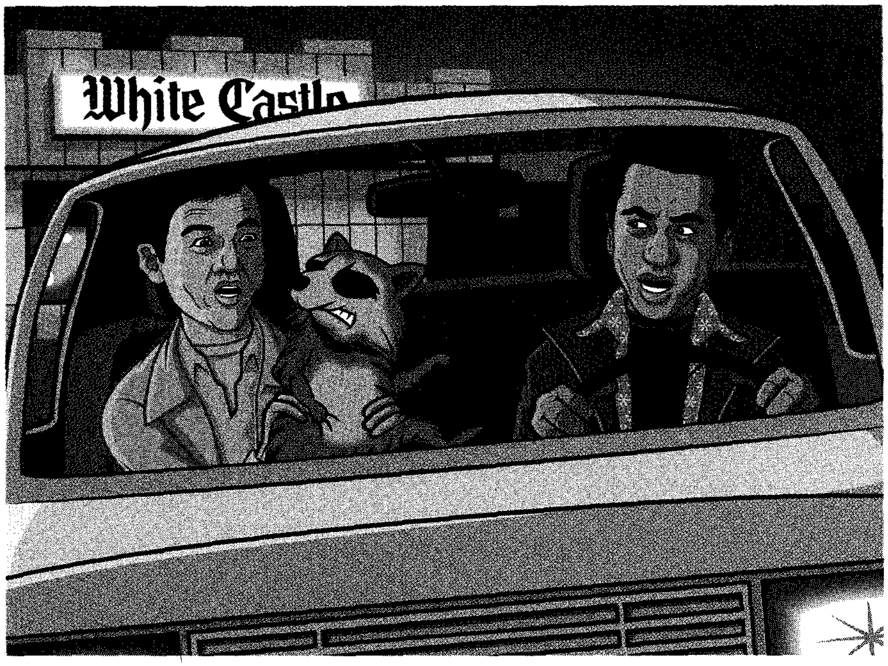
THE VILLAGE
M. Night Shyamalan wrote and directed this horror film about a rural community surrounded by woods filled with mysterious and deadly creatures. With Joaquin Phoenix, Adrien Brody, and Sigourney Weaver. Opening July 30.

FILM NOTES

ANCHORMAN: THE LEGEND OF RON BURGUNDY
Will Ferrell as a seventies-era schmuck—a local-news anchorman with a mustache thick enough to scale a fish. There are a few laughs, and one beautiful prolonged gag at the end involving rival local-news teams. But Ferrell and his old "Saturday Night Live" buddy Adam McKay (who directed) don't seem to have the shape of a movie—any movie—in their bones or even in their hopes. In a typical scene, someone shouts and does something strange, then McKay cuts to someone else shouting and doing something strange, then back to the first guy, then the scene is over. Ferrell does the regular-guy bellow, the nod-and-wink chumminess, the manly stare, the blank-brained self-confidence, but even a schmuck has to have a soul if he's going to be the center of a two-hour movie. Ferrell is a buffoon, but he's not an actor—at least not yet.—*David Denby* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)



BEFORE SUNSET
A lovely sequel to "Before Sunrise," the charmingly diminutive romantic movie that Richard Linklater made in 1995, in which Jesse (Ethan Hawke), a footloose young American, and Celine (Julie Delpy), a French student, spent a night together in Vienna. Nine years have gone by, and Jesse, now a novelist, is hawking a book in Paris, where he runs into Celine, who has become an earnest international health worker. Jesse is supposed to fly home later that day, but they agree to walk around the Left Bank. Like the earlier movie, "Before Sunset" turns into an orgy of talk—flirtatious, soulful, boastful, self-deprecating talk, some of it borderline pretentious but all of it utterly convincing as the intelligent and foolish things said by people who connect through their tastes, ideas, and passions. The drama emerges from the movie's form: it plays in real time, and for about eighty minutes, as Linklater's camera gravely follows these two around, we wonder whether Jesse will go home to his wife and child or allow himself to be fascinated, once again, by a serious young woman given to melancholy self-revelation.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/5/04.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)



John Cho and Kal Penn in "Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle."

MICHAEL WELDON

THE BLIND SWORDSMAN: ZATOICHI
The television personality, movie star, director, and best-selling author Takeshi (Beat) Kitano reincarnates the character of Zatoichi, a beloved figure in Japanese pop culture. Sightless, Zatoichi wanders the countryside seeking work as a humble masseur, cutting down evildoers when they cross his path. The movie is not without its crude pleasures, such as watching the near-comatose Zatoichi suddenly step into action, becoming a human Cuisinart. There is also a trippy strangeness to the whole production: gags when you least expect them, an exuberant dance number at the end, some wild synthesizer music. But Kitano, with his slapped-together filmmaking, is relying heavily on the built-in affection for his hero. In Japanese.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY
Blank-faced and well-muscled, Matt Damon does a convincing impersonation of an action star. As before, he plays Jason Bourne, a sensitive C.I.A. assassin who cannot remember much from his past except all of the awesome combat skills in which he was trained. The film jettisons most of the plot of the original Robert Ludlum book for a predictable revenge story but compensates with several well-staged chase scenes involving real cars plunging off real bridges and similar pleasures. Paul Greengrass's elegant direction creates suspense with just shadows, and he has a flair for chaotic crowd scenes. If anything, the movie needs more chaos; the whole production feels too corporate and polite. It's one of those thrillers in which everyone is always stepping briskly out of gleaming black sedans.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE CLEARING
A rare visit to what is, by any standard, a minor cinematic genre: the unexciting kidnapping. Arnold (Willem Dafoe) is a disgruntled fusspot with a fake mustache; if this were an Ealing comedy, his drive to become a master criminal would have been milked for merriment, but Pieter Jan Brugge's picture is, sad to say, a humor-free product. Arnold's victim is Wayne Hayes (Robert Redford, treading a delicate line between craggy and saggy), who is snatched away from his frosty wife (Helen Mirren) and doesn't look particularly upset about it. The tale picks up pace only when she sets out to deliver a bag of ransom money, leaving the F.B.I. floundering in her wake; that aside, this is an exercise in modulated glumness, so keen to catch the mood of, say, a John Cheever story that it forgets to deliver the basic kick of a thriller. With Alessandro Nivola in the barely visible role of Wayne's son.—*Anthony Lane* (7/12 & 19/04) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village Theatre VII.)

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE
Spencer Tracy interprets Jekyll as a worldly gentleman with a healthy sex drive, and Hyde as his sadistic id. Often underrated, this free and acute rendi-

tion of Robert Louis Stevenson's novella tackles Victorian hypocrisy head-on and plays like a rousing dark operetta—despite, or perhaps because of, its outrageous Freudian hallucination scenes. It co-stars a girlish Lana Turner as Jekyll's conventional fiancée and a blooming Ingrid Bergman as the warm-blooded barmaid who tempts Jekyll and becomes Hyde's kept and tortured woman. As quick and earthy as he is smart and solid, Tracy, under Victor Fleming's direction, achieves the most balanced movie incarnation of Stevenson's hero-villain. (Even the morphing effects are spare and persuasive.) Tracy's Jekyll has an easy virility and his Hyde a warped self-delight and shrewd intelligence, retaining Stevenson's description of Hyde as a man whose defects are hard to pin down. Best of all, Bergman is both ripe and touching in her erotic readiness—a prize that Hyde has to possess, then break. When he advances on this sensual innocent, the horror of the story becomes palpable. John Lee Mahin wrote the script. Originally released in 1941.—*M.S.* (Bryant Park; Aug. 2.)

LA DOLCE VITA

Federico Fellini shows off his gifts for atmosphere and image-making in this moralistic extravaganza about "the sweet life" in Rome. In the course of the nearly three-hour movie, a society journalist named Marcello (Marcello Mastroianni) abandons literary ambition and becomes a publicist. He's not a strong enough antihero to clarify Fellini's most prophetic and compelling theme—the blurring of public and private life. Still, there are some astonishing things here: the statue of Christ being hauled across Rome by a helicopter while bikinied beauties wave to Jesus; bits of a satiric yet dreamy episode involving Anita Ekberg as a Swedish-American sex goddess; and the whole sequence of Marcello taking his father to an archaic night club (apparently, glitz must fade before Fellini can find poetry in it). The enormous cast includes Anouk Aimée, Alain Cuny, and Walter Santesso. In Italian. Originally released in 1960.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; July 28-Aug. 3.)

THE DOOR IN THE FLOOR

Tod Williams's adaptation of the first third of John Irving's novel "A Widow for One Year" has the look of American classicism—gray-shingled Hamptons house, rolling lawns in subdued green—and an aura of quiet intensity and lacerating intimacy. Ted Cole (Jeff Bridges), a successful children's-book writer and illustrator, and his wife, Marion (Kim Basinger), are both held together and separated by the death of their teen-age boys, some years ago, in an accident. Ted deals with his grief by boozing, rampaging around in a loose-flowing dressing gown that he removes for a series of mistresses, and generally acting like a bear in a garbage dump. But Marion has disappeared inside herself; she's dead to her husband and to their four-year-old daughter. Eddie (Jon Foster), a pale and lanky sixteen-year-old, enters this disintegrating marriage as an assistant to Ted; his real job, we understand, is to sleep with the zombie Marion. Eddie, it seems, reminds her of one of the dead sons, and Ted thinks that this teen-ager will bring his wife back to life—or something like that. There's considerable perversity on all sides of this triangle—Kim Basinger is fifty, and Jon Foster is only nineteen—but the disparity is just passed over, without much dramatic development or even ordinary comment. Psychologically, the material is half-senseless and rather unappealing, and the movie drifts into inconsequence.—*D.D.* (7/26/04) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

FAHRENHEIT 9/11

Michael Moore's latest documentary is an incendiary and viciously funny attack on the Bush Administration—a whirlwind of political charges, sinister implications, and derision—in which the President comes off as a betrayer and fool who has all the substance of a stuffed doll. Moore accuses Bush of handing part of America's sovereignty over to the Saudis; he implies that the President, after 9/11, was more effective at frightening the electorate than at pursuing the terrorists; he presents America as an oligarchy in which the wealthy control everything while luring the dispossessed to "volunteer" in endless wars. Saying that pieces of this are true, or partly true, or true when joined to counterclaims—isn't the Army mostly a boon for the working class?—doesn't settle the journalistic issue. The movie's more radical allegations, which arrive like a shower of poison darts, are impossible to sort out and evaluate, and Moore often joins facetious narration to highly edited clips in a way that recalls the agit-prop techniques of dictatorial regimes. The movie is sensational entertainment for those already convinced but may repel the uncommitted. There are a number of powerful sections, however, that are impossible to dismiss, particularly the story of Lila Lipscomb, a Flint, Michigan, mother who loses her son in the Iraq war and, giving way to unappeasable grief, makes a half-crazed pilgrimage to the White House.—*D.D.* (6/28/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

GARDEN STATE

Andrew Largeman (Zach Braff), a struggling actor, arrives in his native New Jersey with some extra baggage: his paraplegic mother has possibly committed suicide, he's been on Zoloft since forever, and his one major acting credit is as a retarded quarterback. This would be a difficult burden for any young man, let alone a début movie. But Braff, who also wrote and directed, keeps the tone light with some very funny homecoming scenes. There's a party where Large is greeted as "Jersey's De Niro," a run-in with a high-school friend turned cop, and, like a winning bass line, the smirking wit of his stoner friend Mark (Peter Sarsgaard). The movie is also lifted by the presence of Natalie Portman, perhaps the ultimate ethereal home-town girl. Braff eventually takes the movie to emotional places where only the extremely tenderhearted will follow, but there are a lot of nice moments that resonate, and a beautiful soundtrack of moody, interior music. With Ian Holm as the icy father and songs by Nick Drake, Simon and Garfunkel, and the Shins.—*M.A.* (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

MARIA FULL OF GRACE

In this superbly poised independent film, Maria (Catalina Sandino Moreno), a willful seventeen-year-old, unhappily pregnant and stuck in a factory job, agrees to serve as a "mule," carrying in her stomach little pellets of heroin from her native Colombia to New Jersey. Joshua Marston, a thirty-five-year-old N.Y.U. film-school graduate, nosed around Colombia and New York's immigrant neighborhoods before beginning to shoot "Maria," his first full-length feature, and the way he dramatized the material seems instinctively right: he goes step by step, detail by detail, emotion by emotion, eliding nothing, exaggerating nothing. When Maria swallows the pellets in Bogotá, for example, Marston doesn't emphasize the sardonic associations with sexual and religious rituals. He also expects us to understand that the exploitation of women is merely one aspect of the cruelty of a society corrupted by drugs. In his calm and lucid way, he has made one of the emblematic coming-to-America stories of our time.—*D.D.* (7/26/04) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN

Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1979 sociopolitical soap opera rode to art-house success on a poster featuring Hanna Schygulla's Dietrich-calibre cleavage and gams. Married for "half a day and a whole night" to an S.S. officer, Schygulla's antiheroine, Maria Braun, decides that she'll remain his wife no matter what she must do when he's not around or how long she must wait for his return from the Russian front. She becomes the lover (and the killer) of a black American G.I., then the mistress and personal adviser of a French-German industrialist. Fassbinder suggests that postwar Germany is in the same spot as Maria, requiring strong national leadership as badly as she needs her husband. But even those of us who don't buy Fassbinder's sloppy, semi-satiric melodrama can admire Schygulla's performance in the title role. In German.—*M.S.* (Moving Image; July 30-Aug. 1.)

SPIDER-MAN 2

Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) is having problems with his stickiness. He keeps changing into his Spiderman duds, leaping through the canyons of Manhattan, and finding, to his dismay, that the white stuff just won't shoot in the way it used to. No option but to hang up the outfit and walk away. Fortunately, we are only halfway through the movie. Once again, Sam Raimi is the director, and once again the plight is one of uncertainty: to swing or not to swing? Not until the arrival of Doc Ock (Alfred Molina), a many-limbed scientist who likes to do antisocial things to subway cars, is our hero moved to rejoin the action. Molina is the real draw of the film, opting not for the standard evil genius but for a good, sorrowing genius who is nudged into malice by boredom and bereavement. In fact, despite the fantastical high of the set pieces, (not least the most pertinent use of a lady's umbrella since "Mary Poppins"), almost everyone here feels rather lonely and stuck. This could be the first superhero franchise that will end up requiring the services of Ingmar Bergman. With Kirsten Dunst, dreamier than ever, as Peter's beloved (but not girlfriend).—*A.L.* (7/12 & 19/04) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE TERMINATOR

Before it was a franchise, it was a terrific B-movie. And before he became a lovable savior, the title character was the ultimate killer—a robot with human flesh and metallic bone designed by the computers of the future, who've taken over earth after inciting a nuclear holocaust. These computers have been using their Terminators to infiltrate human ranks and murder the few nuclear survivors. The Terminator played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, though, has a special mission—to go back into time and kill a contemporary Los Angeles woman who's destined to give birth to the computers' fiercest human enemy. Much of the film's popularity derived from the use of Schwarzenegger as a monolithic sight gag. But what still brings an audience to flashpoint is the way every bit of action, each pungent joke or detail, adds to the director James Cameron's master plan. When Arnold takes a scalpel to his own wounded eyeball, it's pop Buñuel; when he runs over a toy truck, you realize that this world has gone beyond dog-eat-dog—it's machine-eat-machine. (In the most likable touch, we learn that dogs are able to sniff out Terminator intruders among the good guys.) In his own comic-book fashion, Cameron expresses a genuine, organic point of view. He's for spontaneous growth, against inhuman planning. Originally released in 1984.—*M.S.* (Moving Image; Aug. 1.)

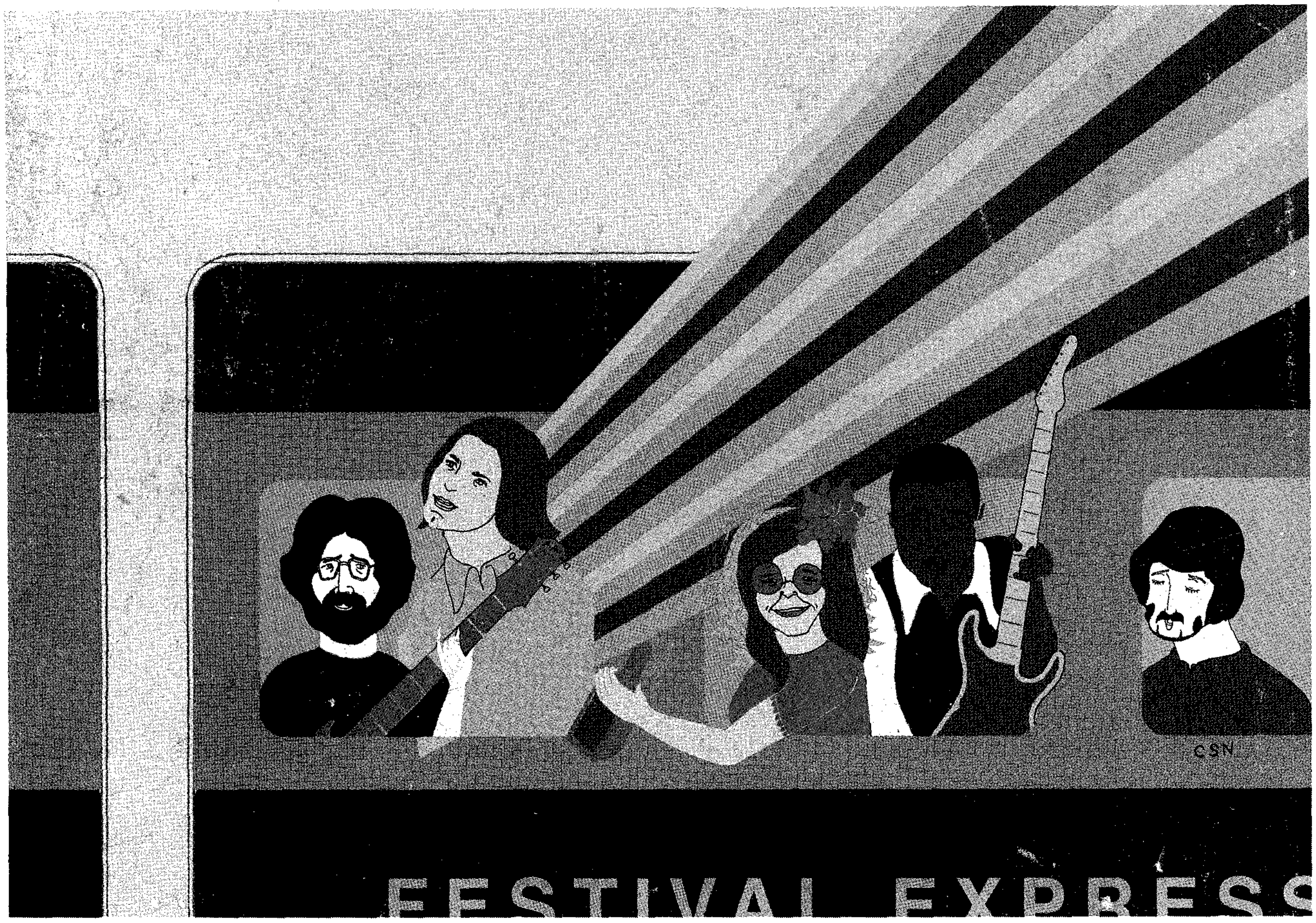
ALSO PLAYING

FACING WINDOWS
Quad Cinema and Sutton 1 and 2.
A HOME AT THE END OF THE WORLD
Paris and Sunshine Cinema.
JUON: THE GRUDGE
Angelika Film Center.
METALLICA: SOME KIND OF MONSTER
Sunshine Cinema and Empire 25.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
(212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.



Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir, Janis Joplin, Buddy Guy, and Rick Danko in the documentary "Festival Express," opening July 30.

Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

CHRISTOPHER NEAL

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Aug. 15: "Paradise (Lost): Los Angeles on Film." July 31 at 2: "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" (1956, Don Siegel). ♦ July 31 at 4: "Them!" (1954, Gordon Douglas). ♦ Aug. 1 at 2: "Repo Man" (1984, Alex Cox). ♦ Aug. 1 at 4: "The Terminator" (†). ♦ Repertory nights. July 30 at 7:30 and July 31-Aug. 1 at 6:30: "The Marriage of Maria Braun" (†).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—A Wong Kar-Wai retrospective. July 30 at 7 and July 31 at 5: "Fallen Angels" (1995; in Cantonese). ♦ July 30 at 9 and July 31 at 2:30 and 9:15: "Chungking Express" (1995; in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English). ♦ July 31 at 7 and Aug. 1 at 7: "Happy Together" (1997; in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish). ♦ Aug. 1 at 3:30: "In the Mood for Love" (2000; in Cantonese). ♦ Aug. 1 at 5:30 and 9:15: "Buenos Aires Zero Degrees" (1999, Kwan Pung-Leung; in Cantonese and Spanish). ♦ Aug. 2 at 7: "As Tears Go By" (1988; in Cantonese). ♦ Aug. 2 at 9: "Days of Being Wild" (1991; in Cantonese). ♦ Special screening. July 30 at 9:30, July 31 and Aug. 1 at 5 and 9:30, and Aug. 2 at 9:30: "The Tracker" (2002, Rolf de Heer).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Gay and lesbian films. July 28 at 4:30 and 9: "Making Grace" (2004, Catherine Gund). ♦ July 28 at 6:45: "Liberty: Three Stories About Life & Death with Bertha Alyce" (2004, Pam Walton and Ruth Carranza). ♦ A Rainer Werner Fassbinder retrospective. All films are in German. July 29 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "The Merchant of Four Seasons" (1971). ♦ July 31 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Lola" (1981). ♦ Aug. 2 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "The American Soldier" (1970). ♦ A Yasujiro Ozu retrospective. All films are in Japanese. July 30 at 3, 6, and 9: "Early Spring" (1956). ♦ Aug. 3 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Record of a Tenement Gentleman" (1947). ♦ Films chosen by Steve Buscemi and Jo Andres. Aug. 1 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "The Straight Story" (1999, David Lynch).

BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: Free drive-in-style moviegoing. Aug. 2: "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (†).

EMPIRE-FULTON FERRY STATE PARK
26 New Dock St., Brooklyn—Thursdays, starting at dusk: More free drive-in-style moviegoing. July 29: "Arsenic and Old Lace" (1944, Frank Capra).

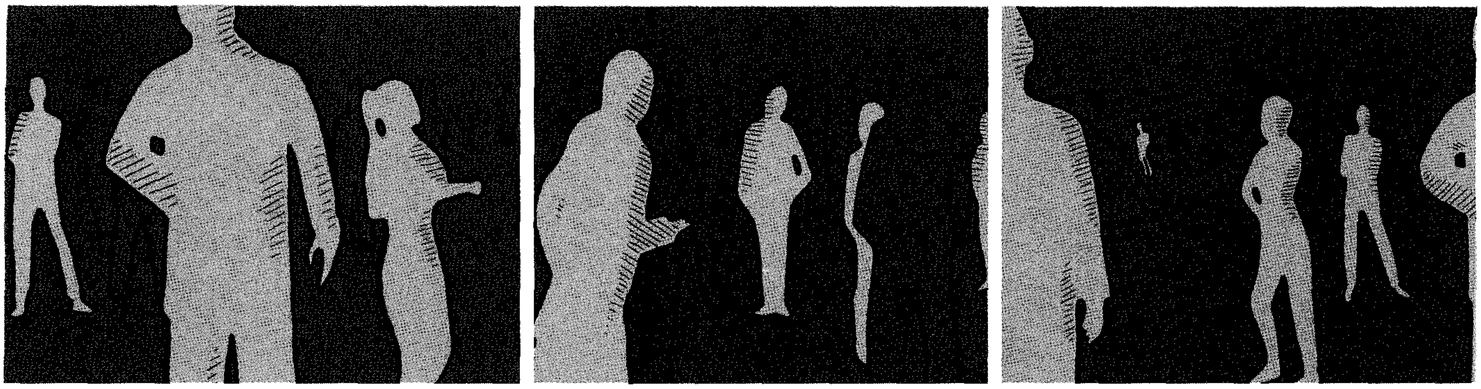
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—July 28-Aug. 3 at 1:10, 4:30, and 9: "La Dolce Vita" (†).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. July 30-31: "Zatoichi #3: New Tale of Zatoichi" (1963, Tokuzo Tanaka; in Japanese).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Aug. 28: "Five-Star Films: Fifty Years of Audience Favorites." July 31 at 6: "Shane" (1953, George Stevens). ♦ July 31 at 8:15: "High Noon" (1952, Fred Zinnemann).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through July 29: "Every Man for Himself: The Films of Maurice Pialat." All films are in French. July 28 at 3 and 6:30: "Van Gogh" (1991). ♦ July 29 at 2:30 and 6:45: "Le Garçu" (1995). ♦ July 29 at 4:45 and 9: "French Chronicles" (1965-66) and "Village of Children" (1970). ♦ A tribute to the English choreographer Sir Frederick Ashton. July 30 at 2 and July 31 at 6:15: "Dance Pretty Lady" (1932, Anthony Asquith). ♦ July 30 at 4:15 and July 31 at 2:30: "The Tales of Beatrix Potter" (1971, Reginald Mills). ♦ July 30 at 6:15 and July 31 at 8:30: "The Tales of Hoffman" (1951, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressberger). ♦ July 30 at 9 and July 31 at 4:30: "Ondine" (1960, Paul Czinner). ♦ Restored rock-and-roll films from Columbia Pictures. Aug. 1 at 2:45 and Aug. 3 at 5:15 and 8:45: "Rock Around the Clock" (1956, Fred F. Sears). ♦ Aug. 1 at 4:30 and Aug. 3 at 3:30 and 7: "Don't Knock the Rock" (1956, Sears). ♦ Aug. 1 at 6:15 and Aug. 2 at 4:30: "Let's Rock!" (1958, Harry Foster). ♦ Aug. 1 at 8 and Aug. 2 at 6:15: "Twist Around the Clock" (1956, Oscar Rudolph).

NOVARTIS



Nearly half the people taking medicine for their high blood pressure still have numbers that are too high.

New medical guidelines state that less than 120/80 is a normal blood pressure for most adults, and that high blood pressure medicine is recommended for numbers at or above 140/90. But millions of people, even those taking prescription medicine, still can't get their numbers down enough.

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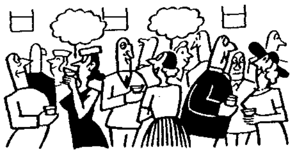
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
BIG DOINGS



So far, this has been a summer of outsized events—the summer in which Michael Moore proclaimed a buddy link (well, sort of) between the Bush and bin Laden families said to have been in place before 9/11, and in which the Boston police department prepared to close off forty miles of local streets and major roadways, including portions of Interstate 93, which snakes under and through the city, in advance of this week's Democratic National Convention, and also to deal with seventy-odd groups of protesters and demonstrators, almost including their own and members of the local firemen's union, who had been locked in a contract battle with City Hall. This summer, as we know, stock in Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia went up thirty-seven per cent the day Stewart was sentenced to five months in federal jail and five months of tasteful house arrest after her conviction for obstruction of justice and lying to investigators; and President Ronald Reagan, eulogized upon his death, was compared to Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln. This was also the summer when the American League All-Star team, batting against Roger Clemens, the National League starter (three hundred and twenty lifetime victories, four thousand two hundred and twenty lifetime strikeouts, and a scintillating 10–3 won-lost record this year for his new team, the Houston Astros), humiliated the Rocket with six thunderous runs in the first inning, hitting for the cycle (single, double, triple, home run) in the process: a monster first-ever in the event. And now, right between the Conventions, here come the Olympic Games (with their one-and-a-half-billion-dollar security budget, which will deploy seventy thousand-odd police and Army personnel at the various sporting venues), and then, of course, more of the campaigns (after the collection of a combined seven hundred and fifty-five million dollars by the two sides) and Election Day itself—reason enough for the rest of us to decide, like the gloomy Rick in "Casablanca," that "it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world."

LAURENT CILLUFFO

Well, not so fast, Rick. Just back off there, will ya? That was then, this is now. Summertime, let's remind ourselves, is still the season for personal betterment and feeling swell. Here, as evidence, we present the recent doings and achievements of three and some more not-so-little friends and colleagues, easily compiled via telephone, e-mail, and fearless hallway interview. (Names have been concealed at the request of the C.I.A.)

Joaquin D., 30. Achievement: Gave up after fourteen hours of solo labor on his two-year accumulation of overdue taxes and hired a tax accountant recommended by an office pal. Conclusion: "He's so nice! It's like having a brand-new great uncle." Dividend achievement: Got his tennis backhand together. Less wrist; don't cross over with your lead foot.

Joanne L., 66. Achievement: Livened up a blah thirty-year-old summer bean-salad recipe. How: Cilantro.

Maureen K., 29. Achievement: Stopped bouncing out feebly to shortstop in Central Park office-league softball games. Hit four solid singles over shortstops' heads. How: "It sounds weird, but I think it's my bat. Our team got these great new bats in May, and it's been like day and night for me."

Pierre B., 28. Achievement: Had himself ordained online as a minister of the Universal Life Church (ulc.org), so that he could perform the marriage ceremony for his old college friend Heather and her boyfriend, Ryan, in a tiny prairie church in Moscow, Idaho. The day was sunny and hot. "The groom's grandparents doubted my credentials, but I got through it O.K. I'd do it again. Anyway, I still have an e-mail from the U.L.C. absolving me of all personal sin."

Rochelle K., 67. Achievement: Attracting an Ilia Underwing moth to her homemade moth-examining rig, on a fourth-floor window facing Riverside Park. How: After dark, turned on an alluring black light she has fastened to an old white table napkin with a clothespin. "Ilias have a drab forewing that looks like bark, but when it's open it shows bright red and black underneath. This has been a good summer for moths."

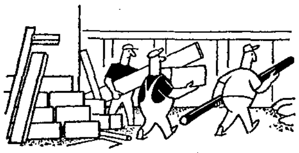
Jeff L., 54. Achievement: Measured, cut, and hung in place new aluminum gutters on his 1929-era back-yard garage in the Throgs Neck area of the Bronx. Also mastered some tricky tin-snipping around the downspouts. While working (and not breaking his neck), remembered the old-time name for guys who once did stuff like this: "tin-knockers."

Gregor D., 83. Achievement: Disposed of well-deceased hundred-pound harbor seal found on his stony Maine beach off Eggemoggin Reach. Connected with a friendly marine biologist named Rosemary, who came, took photos, and said, "We really care about pinniped death." How: Sixty feet of old nylon line, adroitly noosed; shovels, rake, and a light southeast breeze, sent by God. Attached line to stern of red plastic kayak at top of outgoing tide and paddled into bay, where his wife, in adjoining kayak, cut the remains adrift. Model envisioned during operation: Tony Soprano's farewell to Big Pussy aboard that fatal fishing boat.

Jenny McK., 33. Achievement: Finally mastered acoustic-guitar accompaniment to Bob Dylan's "Baby, Let Me Follow You Down," after two months' frustration. Whole trick: Forget weak strumming. Hammer on the F-chord during the first great "down" in the chorus. Yes.

—Roger Angell

SPORTS DEPT.
THE FLOOR MOVED



Madison Square Garden has officially closed up shop, more than a month before the opening of the Republican National Convention. No more concerts or wrestling entertainment or women's hoops until school resumes. The other night, the New York Liberty, the Garden's primary summer tenant, beat the Charlotte Sting at home, 75–58, and immediately afterward began to move everything the team owns up to Radio City Music Hall, the Garden's corporate sister (both venues are owned by Cablevision) and, as of the next day, the city's newest sports arena. No sooner had Maddie, the Liberty's giant dog mascot, removed his head than three Garden employees were busy deflating beach balls to be packed with the rest of the team's bountiful and varied inventory, which within minutes was being wheeled by the cartload to the freight elevator. Many of the items were tagged with orange stickers that read "Camel Room," identifying their destination: the steel-reinforced holding pen for the Christmas-show dromedaries. Other labels specified "Room 303" and "Room 503"—Rockette dressing rooms that would be doubling as locker rooms.

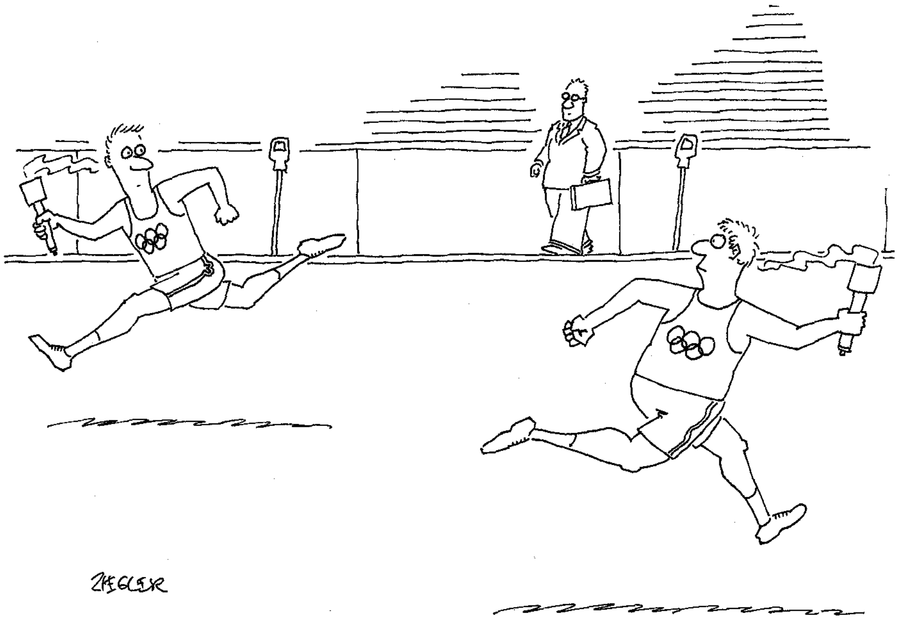
Planning the overnight evacuation of a women's basketball franchise is no small task, judging by the Liberty's master move list. Consider this small sample of the outgoing cargo: three sumo mats, two biohazard containers, four Frisbees, one basketball court, several hundred pink towels, twelve knish warmers, one ultrasound machine, two "Little Tikes" shopping carts, one disco ball, three backboards, twelve megaphones.

The court itself comprises two hundred and twenty-five interlocking pieces of buffed maple, most of them eight feet by four. (The most famous basketball floor, the old Boston Garden parquet, consisted of two hundred and forty-seven squares.) To remove it requires a drill (for unscrewing the bolts that hold the pieces together), a long hook (for tugging the pieces apart once the bolts have been removed), and a good number of large men—four to lift each piece, one to drive the forklift on which the pieces are then stacked, and several more to mill around in some kind of supervisory capacity. Working at a brisk pace, the Garden crew had the floor waiting in the loading bay in about three hours.

Uptown at Radio City, meanwhile, Elton John had to move out before the Liberty could move in, and so commuters on Fifty-first Street the following morning were greeted on the sidewalk by semi-collapsed basketball hoops that resembled giraffes awaiting entry through the stage-door ramp. Inside, standing on the stage, Amy Scheer, a club executive, conducted a hypothetical tour of the basketball set. The court, she explained, would be laid horizontally across the stage, with a few rows of seats at either end, in the wings. Benches and the scorer's table sit against the back wall, which has been padded. Above the padding goes the scenery: a scoreboard, a TV screen for instant replays, two large banners with the Liberty logo superimposed on the Brooklyn Bridge, and cutouts of giant basketballs. "We're going to hang them from different pipes to give layering and depth," Scheer said.

More props soon emerged from stage right. There was a subway car (the L train, for Liberty), to be used during player introductions, and a smallish Radio City marquee ("Now Playing: The New York Liberty"). The disco ball hung high above center stage. Toward

TOM BACHTELL



the end of the day, a team of carpenters began to lay the floor, piece by piece.

Radio City is, of course, legendary for its huge stage, but can it handle a basketball court? Almost. By the following afternoon, the men had installed two hundred and twenty-three pieces. There wasn't enough room for the front corner pieces; the proscenium arch was in the way. The carpenters called a lumberyard for pieces that could be cut to fit.

Shortly before dinner break on the second day, Bumpy, an electrician, stood by the switchboard, watching as the orchestra pit was hydraulically lowered in front of the court. Converting the theatre into a basketball arena, he explained, wasn't all that big a deal. "I've been here thirty-six years, and, let me tell you, I've seen some things," he said. "The hardest show we ever did? Oh, that was 'Siegfried and Roy.' "

One of his co-workers turned around. "Yeah, that was a good show," he said.

"Oh, it was a real good show," Bumpy said. "We used fifty-four trailers." The Liberty move, by comparison, had required just six. Bumpy recalled that, for "Siegfried and Roy," a makeshift butcher shop had even been set up underneath the stage, in order to keep the tigers sufficiently fed. He looked back out onto the court: the Rockettes' manager, herself a former Rockette, was jumping and sliding on the hardwood in her heels, testing the traction ("It's not slippery, so that's good," she said) and making sure the shoes wouldn't leave a mark when the Rockettes perform at halftime.

"You'll see, if this takes off they're going to do more of this sports stuff," Bumpy said. "Except hockey. It's too small for hockey."

—*Ben McGrath*

THE BENCH
U.S. V. STEWART, PART II

By last week, all signs of Martha Stewart's legal ordeal—the TV cameras, the lines of spectators, and the bottles of Japanese herbal tea that Stewart and her legal team sipped at the defense table—had vanished from the federal courthouse downtown. But Courtroom 110 still had a celebrity trial and a defendant named Stewart, although this one's name might as well be followed by the words "no relation *at all*."

In the courthouse's dim marble corridors, Lynne Stewart's celebrity status may even outrank Martha's. For two decades, she has been one of the most recognizable criminal-defense lawyers in town, known both for her causes (mostly of the left) and for her appearance (a rounded frame of not quite five feet that is usually covered in a floral-print housedress). "I'm not exactly in Martha's social stratum, and, if anyone wants to know where I got my handbag, it's a Canal Street knockoff," Stewart said in her jolly growl one day last week. "But I do love Martha's housewares. I use them all the time. And my son met his wife on a trip to Nicaragua during the Sandinista days. She's now Marta Stewart."

Lynne Stewart looked quite chipper for someone facing the prospect of four decades in prison. In the mid-nineties, Stewart took on as a client Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, the blind Egyptian cleric who was charged with conspiring with his followers to bomb various places in New York City, including bridges, tunnels, and the United Nations. After a year-long trial, the Sheikh was convicted, but Stewart continued to represent him during his appeals. In May, 2000, in a meeting with Stewart at a federal prison in Minnesota, Abdel Rahman dictated a statement to an Arabic translator calling for an end to the ceasefire between his radical-Islamist organization and the Egyptian government; Stewart, in turn, called reporters to confirm Abdel Rahman's desire to see the ceasefire terminated. (Stewart disputes this description of the Sheikh's statement.) As a result of these events, Stewart, along with the translator and a paralegal, was charged with conspiring to assist terrorists. The trial is expected to last into the fall.

The case raises profound questions about the intersection of the right to counsel and the security of the public, but few of those issues were on display last week, when the evidence consisted mostly of the droning recitation of transcripts and news clippings. In a forlorn attempt to liven things up, the prosecutors asked colleagues in the United States Attorney's office to act out English translations of some wiretapped conversations, which led to the slightly comical sight of a young, blond lawyer reading such lines as "God is thine aid." Earlier in the week, several jurors had complained to Judge John Koeltl that some of their colleagues were sleeping. In response, the judge gave the jurors an extra long lunch on Wednesday, so that they could eat outside.

Koeltl's courtroom is dominated by

Stewart's lawyer, Michael Tigar, himself a legendary figure of the legal left, whose clients have ranged from the family of the murdered Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier to the Oklahoma City bomber Terry Nichols. Tigar and Stewart are both in their early sixties; in spite of their similar politics and similar careers, they had never met before this case, but they have developed a fast and warm friendship. A native of California, Tigar has a leonine air and a John Edwards-style cowlick, and he poses a marked contrast to the rumpled Stewart, but they banter easily, suggesting what Burns and Allen might have sounded like if they had belonged to the Weather Underground. One running gag concerns the strange coincidences between Martha's trial and Lynne's. How likely was it, for example, that one of the prosecutors in Lynne's case would be Christopher Morvillo, the son of Martha's lawyer Robert? And will the next defendant in Courtroom 110 be the Secret Service expert charged with perjury in Martha's trial? That would be Larry Stewart (no relation!).

Lynne Stewart

Lynne Stewart has been around the courthouse for so long that she greets the cafeteria workers by name, and her new status as a defendant hasn't curbed her outspoken ways. During Wednesday's lunch break, she and Tigar met with a group of about sixty high-school students who were part of a summer program at Columbia University. Gathered in the cafeteria, the students seemed alternately enthralled and baffled by her. (They greeted references to the Black Panthers with uncomprehending stares.) During a rare pause for breath, Stewart turned to Tigar and asked, "Do you want to talk about what's at stake in the case?"

"Whatever you say," Tigar said.

"That's right," she replied, beaming. "I'm the client. I'm in charge."

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

THE LITTLE GUY
CHEAP GAS

Late this spring, as gas prices reached record highs and the Bush and Kerry campaigns jostled over which candidate was more pump-friendly, a Queens man named Inder Parmar began selling gas at about thirty cents below the market rate. By his reckoning, the big oil companies charge too much. "They should not be ripping off the American public like they are," he explained one day at his gas station, in Long Island City. "They are taking advantage of people's anxiety about the war."

Parmar, who immigrated to the United States from India twenty-five years ago, has spent the past couple of years acting as a kind of one-man insurrectionary force against Big Petroleum, a Punjabi combo of Robin Hood, Thomas Paine, and Al Goldstein. He is forty-four and has a fleshy, boyish face and a penchant for corny cashier humor—for example, he likes to ask gray-bearded bikers for I.D. before selling them beer. As he spoke, a steady line of vehicles, mostly taxis and town cars, pulled up to the pumps out front. Parmar drove a taxi for five years before he went into the gas business, in 1989, and his station offers the sort of amenities that cabbies like: cheap gas, free coffee, unlocked bathrooms. It is also covered with signs. One reads "Regular Gas $1.89 Vote for Kerry." Another says:

Getty-Lukoil
"Russian Tycoon"
Supported by President Bush & Putin
The Sweatshops of America

Armed with these slogans, a fax machine behind the deli counter, and a well-stoked sense of outrage, Parmar has been waging a guerrilla campaign against Getty, from whom he has been leasing his station. Getty franchise signs still mark the premises, but he has covered them with blue plastic tarps. His falling out with the company dates to 2002, after Getty was acquired by the Russian oil conglomerate Lukoil, and for Parmar the feud has the sting of a love affair gone sour. In the early years, his relations with his landlord were amiable enough, but, once Lukoil took over Getty, he says, his rent was raised, which squeezed his operating margin to the point where it was nearly impossible for him to earn a living. "They make sixty cents a gallon," Parmar claimed. "They give their dealers only three or four cents a gallon."

In June of last year, Parmar formed a lobbying association of fellow Getty-station operators—many of them from India, Pakistan, and the Middle East—who felt aggrieved under the new regime. The group convened over curry at a Flushing banquet hall and delegated their newly appointed president, Parmar, to approach Getty with a list of complaints. Parmar drove out to Getty headquarters, in East Meadow, Long Island, and met with a senior executive, but, after a brief détente, he elected to take a more confrontational route. In a simultaneous act of protest and thrift, Parmar stopped paying his rent. Getty stopped delivering gas, and served him with an eviction notice, which he chose to contest in court.

With his pumps cut off, Parmar was forced to rely on a meagre trade in candy and cigarettes. Legal fees were draining the family savings, but he had found a crusade. He faxed a flurry of letters to politicians in the United States and Russia. He picketed Getty headquarters with his three children during their spring break. He called Lukoil headquarters in Moscow every day, for months. "There is only one person there who speaks English—Dimitri," Parmar said. "If you call at five or six o'clock in the morning our time, you can talk to Dimitri personally." Reached in Moscow last week (at 6:21 A.M.), Dimitri, whose last

TOM BACHTELL

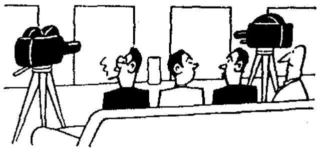
name is Dolgov, sounded very weary of the subject of Inder Parmar and referred questions to "our daughter company in New York." A Getty spokesman characterized Parmar as a "bitter, disgruntled former dealer" and said that his charges against the company and his depiction of the economics of the petroleum business were "false and misleading."

In April, Parmar found an independent New York wholesaler who would sell him gas, and soon the pumps were flowing again. Like a Yankee Stadium hot-dog vender without a permit, Parmar announced cut-rate prices. As word got out, the station thrived. People made special trips for cheap gas. Parmar marked the Fourth of July by declaring "independence with the American public," which meant slashing prices by four more cents and playing party music from speakers that had been rigged up near the pumps.

Testimony in the eviction trial ended a few weeks ago. Afterward, Parmar returned to the station dressed in his courthouse clothes—green cargo pants, white button-down shirt with a Kwik Farm patch. The judge's ruling will be delivered soon, and although Parmar seems resigned to the fact that eviction looms, a festive air hung over the station. His brother Singh brought out watermelon slices on paper plates. Parmar ate a piece and considered his future. "Maybe I will be a manager at another gas station," he said. "Or drive a taxi."

—*Field Maloney*

ON THE SET
CANDIDATE



Careful observers at the Democratic National Convention in Boston this week may notice an unusual encounter, one that the historian Daniel Boorstin might have called a pseudo pseudo-event. Alexandra Kerry, the candidate's daughter, is filming a documentary about her father's campaign. Cynthia Nixon, the "Sex and the City" actress, is also filming a documentary about her father's campaign. The two camera crews will collide when they both try to interview Ron Reagan, Jr., who himself will be trailed by cameras from MSNBC. And, finally, the entire scene will be filmed by the director Robert Altman.

Of course, Cynthia Nixon will be acting, reprising her role as Alex Tanner, the earnest daughter of the Democratic Presidential aspirant Jack Tanner, who was the subject of Altman's 1988 television series "Tanner '88." The original episodes, which were written by Garry Trudeau, followed Tanner (the actor Michael Murphy) in real time on the campaign trail, as he mingled with the likes of Jesse Jackson, Bob Dole, and, in an outtake, John Kerry. The joke, which gained momentum, was that many spectators could not tell the difference between Tanner's simulated campaign events and the real ones. Altman and Trudeau had created a fake campaign with better production values (and, arguably, a more appealing message) than Michael Dukakis's. When the documentary screened in France, it erased any lingering doubt that American politics was a televised pageant.

The gulling resumed the other day at a movie theatre on the Upper West Side, where Altman was filming a new episode, for a sequel that is scheduled to air in October. Sixteen years after her father's election run, Alex Tanner has become a documentary filmmaker who is at work on a film about him called "My Candidate." She also has a film student following her with a miniature digital camera, making a documentary about her. The point of all this camera pointing, Altman declared between takes, is that "everyone has a fucking camera these days. We don't live our own lives."

At seventy-nine, Altman has the appearance of a vigorous grandpa. All morning, he had been directing one of his signature crowd scenes: moviegoers filing into a theatre for the rough-cut première of "My Candidate," as Alex is interviewed for an entertainment-news TV program. Mixed in with the extras are movie-industry people, such as the publicist Lois Smith and Bingham Ray, the former head of United Artists. Getting a crowd to act natural is hard work, and Altman, who was suffering from a sore throat, made playful, irascible comments: "I hate this fucking job. I should be on the beach sleeping and smoking grass."

Around noon, Robert Redford strode onto the set, in a black T-shirt and tan hiking pants. He had come to play himself, the screen idol turned independent-film champion. Altman was relaxing with a cup of tea, and he reminded Redford of a television show that they had worked on together some forty years ago. Redford replied, "I can't remember yesterday, but I remember when I met you then, and you said, 'I just saw the movie that has changed my life.' "

Altman smiled and said, "What was that?"

"It was 'La Dolce Vita.' " At the memory of Fellini, Altman looked thoughtful. Redford continued, " '8½' is better."

"Well, 'La Dolce Vita' was my virgin experience," Altman said. Redford laughed and left to get dressed.

A bystander reminded Altman that "La Dolce Vita" is where the word "paparazzi" comes from, as Paparazzo was the name of a photographer in the film. Altman said that he remembered this and went on, "That's the best part of this production. Alex captures something damaging about her father in her film. He tells her she has to take it out of the film, because it will ruin his career. The culture, politics, has become incestuous. Everybody starts crossing the line." He then asked a reporter if he wanted to be an extra in the scene with Redford. The reporter thought for a moment about "La Dolce Vita," in which an entertainment journalist ends up orchestrating a drunken orgy in the Italian countryside. "O.K.," he replied.

While waiting for Redford, the extras did crossword puzzles, mocked the camera crew ("That guy thinks he's Tom Cruise"), looked into little hand mirrors, and practiced their laughs. Then Redford reappeared to deliver a speech in which he tells Alex, who is devastated after a disastrous screening, not to give up. He did two takes, and left the set to rousing applause. "That's acting," one extra whispered to another. "Take notes."

—*Michael Agger*

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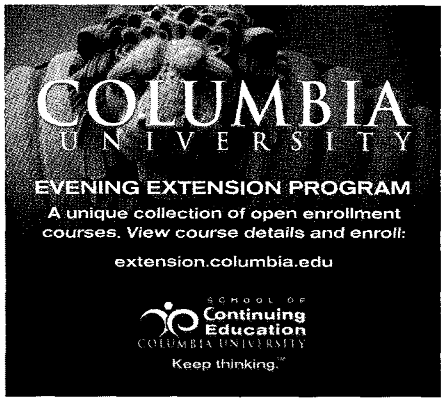

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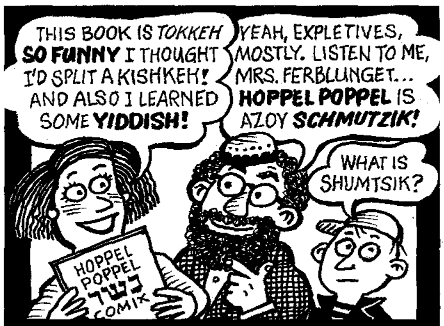
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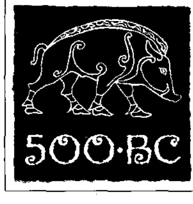

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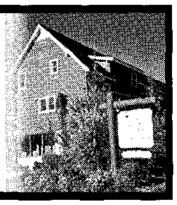

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ANNALS OF ECONOMICS

WINNERS AND LOSERS

The truth about free trade.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

N. Gregory Mankiw, the chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, is a tall, mild-mannered Harvard scholar, widely admired within his profession for his sharp mind and clear exposition. He joined the Bush Administration last year, replacing Glenn Hubbard, who returned to Columbia University, and during his first nine months in Washington he attracted little attention, which suited him fine. However, in February, Mankiw found himself in the headlines after he described outsourcing—the shifting abroad of previously secure jobs, such as accounting and computer programming—as "the latest manifestation of the gains from trade that economists have talked about at least since Adam Smith." As Mankiw put it, "Outsourcing is just a new way of doing international trade. . . . More things are tradable than were tradable in the past and that's a good thing."

The response to these statements was immediate and bipartisan. Senator John Kerry, the Presidential candidate-elect, accused the White House of wishing "to export more of our jobs overseas." Tom Daschle, the Senate Democratic leader, claimed that President Bush and his advisers subscribed to "Alice-in-Wonderland economics." On the Republican side, Dennis Hastert, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, said Mankiw's "theory fails a basic test of economics," and Donald Manzullo, a congressman from Illinois, called for his resignation. Even the President seemed to disown Mankiw's words. "There are people looking for work because jobs have gone overseas," he said. "We need to act to make sure there are more jobs at home."

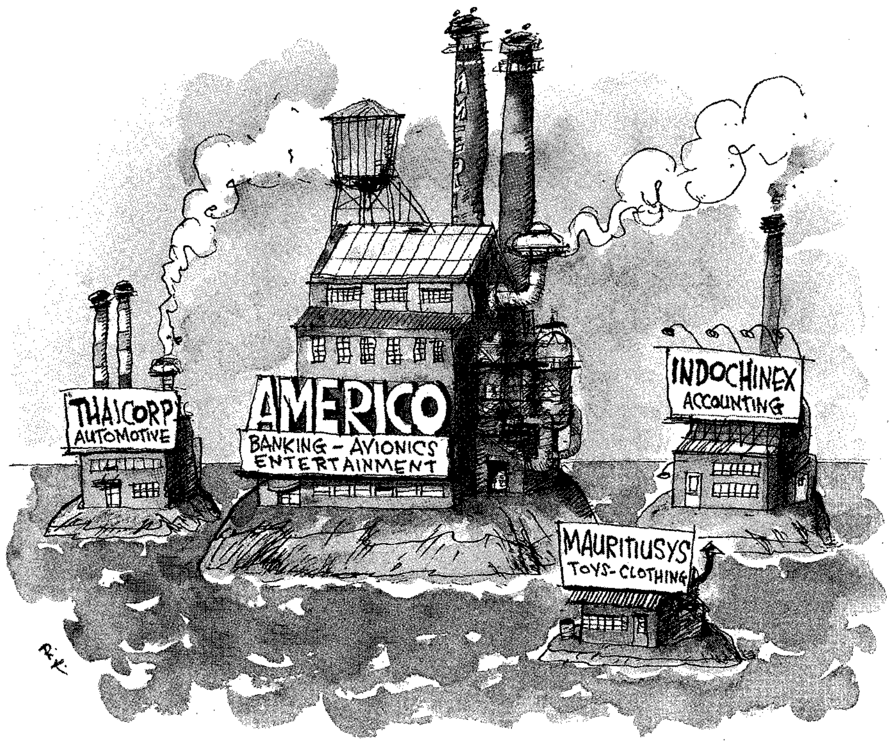
Shortly after receiving this public upbraiding, a chastened Mankiw spoke at a conference of economists, in Washington. He said that he had learned a valuable lesson: "Economists and non-economists speak very different languages. The two languages share many words in common, but they are often interpreted in different ways." Mankiw had a point. Put two economists in a room together and plain English is usually the first casualty. And yet the outcry his statements provoked cannot be dismissed as a linguistic misunderstanding. Although the number of people employed has picked up in recent months, the economy is still creating far fewer jobs than it did during previous cyclical upswings. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, non-farm employment peaked in March, 2001, at 132.5 million. In June, 2004, almost three years into an "economic recovery," total non-farm employment was 131.1 million. It is also an undisputed fact that many American businesses are choosing to relocate production to places like China and India, where there is ample cheap labor. I.B.M., for one, has confirmed that it is considering moving tens of thousands of jobs overseas to save money. In the past, manufacturing bore the brunt of this global labor arbitrage. Today, largely thanks to digitization and the Internet, the service sector, which employs fully four-fifths of the labor force, is increasingly affected. Many white-collar industries that once provided safe, well-paid employment, such as telecommunications, insurance, and stockbroking, are no longer immune from the temptation to outsource.

Well-educated American workers see software programmers in Bangalore earning six dollars an hour, when similarly trained domestic programmers are paid fifty or sixty dollars an hour, and, not surprisingly, they worry about their own livelihoods. Politicians are paid to reflect these concerns. As a senator, Kerry supported a host of free-trade initiatives, including the North American Free Trade Agreement and the extension of Most Favored Nation status to China. But once he embarked on a Presidential campaign he railed against "Benedict Arnold C.E.O.s" who transfer jobs overseas, and he proposed policies designed to limit outsourcing. Senator John Edwards, Kerry's running mate, has taken an even harder line. The Bush Administration, despite its ostensible support for trade liberalization, didn't hesitate to impose tariffs on foreign steel to protect domestic producers in swing states such as Ohio and West Virginia. The steel tariffs were eventually removed, after the European Union threatened a trade war, but the United States continues to provide hefty subsidies to dairy farmers, tobacco growers, and other agricultural producers.

Given these political realities, it is left to economists to defend free trade, which they tend to do without reservation, regardless of political affiliation. For example, one of Mankiw's predecessors, Martin N. Baily, who served in the Clinton Administration, has just co-authored a paper entitled "Exploding the Myths of Offshoring," which echoes Mankiw's arguments almost word for word. Despite Kerry's tough public stance, many of his economic advisers endorse views similar to Mankiw's and Baily's, as do the vast majority of economic commentators. During recent months, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, *Business Week*, *Fortune*, and *The Economist* have each published articles pointing out the benefits of outsourcing. Only a few journalists have dared to challenge the received wisdom, most notably CNN's Lou Dobbs, who has been conducting a virulent populist attack on businesses that shift jobs overseas. Surely Dobbs, who left CNN for a while to work at Space.com, hasn't spotted something that the luminaries of the economics profession have missed?

Surprisingly enough, he might well have. While outsourcing isn't the only reason that businesses are so reluctant to hire American workers—rising productivity and a lack of faith in the recovery are others—it is certainly playing some role, a fact that corporate executives are much more willing to admit than economists are. Moreover, economists tend to overstate the theoretical case for outsourcing, arguing that trade liberalization is always and everywhere beneficial, which simply isn't true. In today's world, where multinational corporations can produce many goods and services practically anywhere, and where investment capital can move from one continent to another at the flick of a switch, there is no economic theory which guarantees that new types of trade, such as outsourcing, automatically benefit the United States. Some Americans gain: consumers, who enjoy lower prices; stockholders, who see profits rising at companies that employ cheap foreign labor. Some Americans lose: workers whose jobs are displaced; the owners of firms whose contracts are transferred to foreign suppliers. But the economists' argument that the country as a whole inevitably benefits is questionable.

As Mankiw indicated, it was Adam Smith who developed the argument that the unfettered exchange of goods and services allows individuals to specialize in what they do best, thereby raising over-all income and prosperity. "The taylor does not attempt to make his own shoes, but buys them of the shoemaker," Smith wrote in "The Wealth of Nations," which was published in 1776. "The shoemaker does not attempt to make his own clothes but employs a taylor." It may seem remarkable that economists still refer to the work of a Scottish radical who didn't even call himself an economist—his title at Glasgow University was professor of moral philosophy—but the division of labor, which is what Smith was talking about, lies at the heart of outsourcing and offshoring. (The two phrases once had distinct meanings, but now they are used interchangeably.)

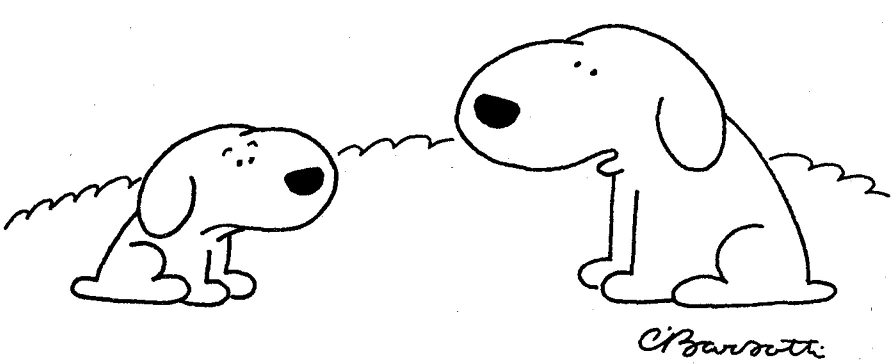


Outsourcing isn't the only reason that Americans are losing jobs, but it's playing a role.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Smith took the logic of specialization and applied it to the international market, arguing that no country should produce anything it could import more cheaply from abroad. "What is prudence in the conduct of every private family can scarcely be folly in that of a great kingdom," he wrote. This analysis implied that countries should concentrate on industries in which they are the low-cost producer, or, in the language of today's economists, industries in which they have an "absolute advantage" over foreign competitors.

A classic example involved Lancashire textile mills, which exploited the damp climate of northern England, and Portuguese vineyards, which prospered in the southern sun. In the presence of prohibitive tariffs on imports and exports, which were widespread at the time Smith was writing, England would have been forced to make its own wine (or go without), and Portugal would have had to manufacture cloth, which would have wasted valuable resources. But if free trade was introduced each country could concentrate on its strength, with England exchanging its surplus cloth for Portugal's surplus wine,



"All true, but their kind did *invent the can opener."*

• •

to the benefit of consumers in both places.

The principle of absolute advantage is relatively easy to understand, and economists cite it all the time in an attempt to alleviate concerns about outsourcing. "The benefits from new forms of trade, such as in services, are no different from the benefits from traditional trade in goods," the Council of Economic Advisers said in its testimony to Congress earlier this year. "When a good or service is produced at lower cost in another country, it makes sense to import it rather than produce it domestically. This allows the United States to devote its resources to more productive purposes."

However, some types of offshoring are not so easy to rationalize. American insurance firms are hiring workers in countries like India to process customer claims. Yet many of the Americans who are being displaced are well-educated and productive employees who could probably do the job better than their Indian counterparts. Why, then, does this sort of trade benefit the United States? David Ricardo, another ancient British economist, answered this question in "Principles of Political Economy and Taxation," which was published in 1817, and it is his defense of free trade that Mankiw and his colleagues rely on to this day. Where Smith argued that nations gain by exporting goods which they can make more cheaply than other countries, Ricardo said that trade between countries makes sense even if one of the countries is the low-cost producer in every industry.

Suppose, he said, that in Portugal it takes ninety workers to make cloth and eighty workers to make wine, whereas in England cloth production requires a hundred workers and wine production requires a hundred and twenty. Then, assuming wages are the same in both countries, Portugal has an "absolute advantage" in wine *and* cloth. Should it still trade with England? Yes, said Ricardo. Compared with each other, he pointed out, Portugal's vineyards are still more efficient than its textile mills. Therefore, it makes sense for the country to specialize in wine production, export what it doesn't need, and import British cloth. Portugal's "comparative advantage" lies in wine.

Ricardo's argument is subtle—Paul Samuelson, the great M.I.T. economist, once said that comparative advantage is the most difficult economic theory to grasp—but it is also extremely powerful. It implies that the United States shouldn't try to keep hold of low-value businesses, such as insurance processing and telephone-call centers, even if its workers could operate them more efficiently than their counterparts in developing countries. Instead, it should concentrate on building up businesses like publishing and entertainment, where the displaced workers can be employed more productively. According to some estimates, the copyright business, which includes film, music, books, and software, accounts for about five per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, which means it is the biggest sector in the economy, bigger even than the auto industry. If the economists are to be believed, this is just as things should be: one industry that the United States used to dominate declines; another rises to take its place.

Any sensible discussion of trade has to acknowledge the power of comparative advantage. Capitalism has succeeded where other systems have failed in large part because it allows countries to develop according to its dictates. Poor places, like Mauritius and Indonesia, start out by producing labor-intensive goods, such as toys and clothing. Middle-income countries, such as South Korea and Taiwan, enter more advanced businesses, such as the manufacture of automobiles and consumer electronics. And developed nations, such as Japan and the United States, operate at the frontier of technology, creating industries like wireless communications and biotechnology. This hierarchy of production helps lift poor nations out of poverty. According to the World Bank, between 1981 and 2001 in East Asia the number of people living on less than a dollar a day, which is the bank's threshold for acute poverty, fell from about eight hundred million to less than three hundred million. This dramatic reduction would not have taken place if Thailand, Malaysia, and other Asian countries had been unable to export their products to the developed world.

But how does the rise of potential economic superpowers like China and India benefit the United States? Here, Ricardo's theory needs applying carefully. In a heretical but fascinating book, "Global Trade and Conflicting National Interests," which appeared in 2000, Ralph E. Gomory, the president of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and William J. Baumol, an economist at N.Y.U., examined what happens when a low-wage economy begins competing with a high-wage economy. Unlike many economists, who tend to rely on make-believe models, Gomory and Baumol tried to be realistic. They assumed that export industries operate most efficiently on a large scale, which means that they tend to be concentrated in one region, and that countries can learn things from each other, such as how to assemble televisions and write software. The results of this analysis were startling. "If the wage differential between two trading countries is sufficiently large, the loss of industries to the low-wage, underdeveloped country may well benefit both countries at the national level," Gomory testified to Congress earlier this year. "However, as the underdeveloped country develops and starts to look more like the developed one, the balance turns around and further loss of industries becomes harmful to the overall welfare of the more developed nation."

This conclusion directly challenges Mankiw's claim that free trade must, as a matter of economic logic, benefit the United States. It supports the commonsense notion that what helps one nation can hurt another, and that countries adversely affected by foreign competition can lose out permanently. Although the work of Gomory and Baumol hasn't received much attention from other economists, and it certainly isn't the final word on the subject, it implies, at the very least, that the potential gains and losses from outsourcing need to be weighed.

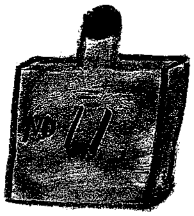
In principle, it ought to be possible for the winners from free trade—consumers and stockholders, say—to compensate the losers with monetary benefits. In practice, such transfers rarely occur. Research by the Princeton economist Henry Farber, among others, shows that workers displaced by foreign competition are usually forced to take a pay cut, that is if they are fortunate enough to find new jobs. (The average cut is thirteen per cent.) Cities hit by plant closings take years to recover, and some—such as Gary, Indiana; Flint, Michigan; and Syracuse—never do.

The nearest thing to a compensation scheme is the federal Trade Adjustment Assistance program, which has recently been expanded. In 2003, this scheme provided income support and retraining grants to more than two hundred thousand displaced workers. However, a 2001 report by the General Accounting Office has shown that it is often ineffective, especially for older, less educated workers. Other ideas have been proposed, such as "wage insurance" for workers threatened by foreign competition, and tax credits for firms that invest in worker retraining, but with the budget deficit already approaching five hundred billion dollars their cost is prohibitive.

Although the Bush Administration beefed up the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, some of its members question the very idea of compensating the losers from trade. In a capitalist system, they point out, jobs are eliminated all the time, as a result of technical progress and shifting consumer tastes. Why, they ask, should the victims of trade get a better deal than the victims of a robot? Ben S. Bernanke, a Princeton economist and a member of the Federal Reserve Board, recently estimated that the American economy eliminates roughly fifteen million jobs a year—about one in seven of the total—as it redirects workers and resources to growing industries. By comparison, Ravi Aron, an economist at the Wharton School of Business, put the number of white-collar jobs lost to outsourcing between the start of 2000 and February of 2004 at about a hundred thousand a year. Other estimates, which include manufacturing, suggest that trade will eliminate perhaps three hundred and fifty thousand jobs this year. As Bernanke points out, even if this higher figure is correct, it implies that foreign competition accounts for only about one in fifty of all job losses.

That isn't the final analysis, however. Outsourcing service-sector jobs is a relatively new phenomenon, and it is growing fast. A widely cited example features Indian radiologists who examine X-rays from places like Miami and Chicago, and transmit their diagnoses via the Internet. It isn't hard to imagine other jobs that might be affected: reservation agents, telephone solicitors, computer programmers, accountants, database managers, financial analysts, and anybody else who performs easily replicable tasks with the aid of a computer. The jobs that are likely to remain safe are those which require physical proximity and intellectual flexibility, such as nursing, plumbing, social work, and teaching.

One report, from Forrester Research, a technology consulting firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts, suggested that between now and 2015 about 3.3 million white-collar positions will shift abroad. Outsourcing of manufacturing jobs is also on the rise. According to Economy.com, a research firm based in West Chester, Pennsylvania, taking service industries and manufacturing together, the number of jobs moving overseas will reach six hundred thousand a year by 2010. Predictions of this nature should be regarded as educated guesswork, but they illustrate that concern about outsourcing isn't a passing fad—a situation that at least some mainstream economists are willing to acknowledge.



"A huge, new swatch of our jobs will become vulnerable to foreign competition over the next few years," Berkeley's J. Bradford DeLong and Stephen S. Cohen wrote in an article that DeLong recently posted on his Web site. "This new set of potentially tradeable jobs are in many cases held by people who are not accustomed to layoffs. Often, they are high-paying, clean, good jobs. Some are the best jobs. The people who hold them are quite convinced that they are on top—that they have these jobs and that these jobs are well-paying—because they are the best people who deserve to have them; they are smart and industrious."

Some economists privately acknowledge that the arguments about outsourcing are nuanced, but they fear that any weakening of support for free trade could do untold damage to the economy. During the Great Depression, Congress introduced the infamous Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which raised duties on a range of foreign goods. Other countries retaliated, and the subsequent downturn in international trade intensified the slump. The economists are right when they say protectionism isn't the answer to outsourcing. But they need to get beyond pat slogans about free trade.

John Kerry has at least tried to address the issue. His outsourcing plan, which was largely drawn up by Jason Furman, a young economist who was formerly one of Mankiw's students at Harvard, would revoke tax breaks for companies that shift production overseas and redistribute some of the extra revenue in the form of subsidies to firms that expand hiring in the United States. Politically, this proposal is an astute response to popular concern about outsourcing. Practically, it is unlikely to have much impact. All too often, the cost reductions that firms enjoy by moving jobs abroad are so large that hitting them with a tax increase wouldn't make much difference to their calculations. And employment subsidies often end up benefitting workers who would have been hired anyway.

There is another issue, which hasn't been addressed. At the moment, the outsourcing debate is focussed on jobs and employment security. Soon, it will revolve around wages and benefits as well. Ultimately, it is the level of demand in the economy, not trade policy, that dictates the pace of job creation. As long as the Federal Reserve and Congress utilize monetary and fiscal policies effectively to keep up spending, the economy should eventually create enough jobs of some sort to occupy most people who want to work. But what sort of pay will they command? A long-established theorem of international economics—the "factor-price equalization theorem"—states that when two countries start out with similar technology and skills but different wage rates, trade between them will reduce wages in the high-paying country and increase wages in the low-paying country until, eventually, workers in both places end up earning the same amount.

Until now, most American workers have been able to escape this pincer movement, but as countries like China and India fulfill their potential this may change. More and more American workers will be forced to compete with poorly paid labor in the developing world, and the downward pressure on American wages could become irresistible. In the nineteen-seventies, when Asian manufacturers targeted their American rivals, Japanese wages were about half of American wages, and the resultant competition was one reason that workers' earnings stagnated for a generation. Today, workers in India earn between a fifth and a tenth as much as their American counterparts. "On the one hand, economists will say that the gains from trade will thereby be that much greater for the economy as a whole," DeLong and Cohen write. "On the other hand, the potential downward pressure on loser workers in rich countries will be that much greater as well."

Some industries that compete internationally, such as pharmaceuticals and avionics, have succeeded despite paying their workers high wages, because the United States has maintained an edge in science and technology. But the ongoing transfer of knowledge and expertise to developing countries, as well as changing attitudes toward business and entrepreneurship in those societies, means American leadership can no longer be taken for granted.

The essential point is that comparative advantage is no longer endowed by nature: through hard work and enlightened administration, countries can wrest it from each other's grasp. Ricardo was writing about economies dominated by agriculture and rudimentary manufacturing, where a favorable climate and the ready availability of raw materials were vital. These days, the keys to economic success are a well-educated workforce, technical know-how, high levels of capital investment, and entrepreneurial zeal—all of which countries can acquire with the help of supportive governments, multinational firms, and international investors.

A couple of months ago, the *Times* reported that the United States is losing its dominance in basic scientific research, reflected in the fact that the proportion of American articles in a number of top physics journals fell from sixty-one per cent in 1983 to twenty-nine per cent in 2003. This decline reflects disturbing trends throughout the education system. Indian colleges, with their strong programs in science and math, are producing more than forty thousand graduates in computer science a year, with enrollment increasing all the time. In the United States, meanwhile, many colleges are struggling to fill their science programs, and high-school dropout rates are higher than they were thirty-five years ago. In 1969, 77.1 per cent of seventeen-year-olds graduated; in 2002, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the figure was 72.5 per cent. As Pedro Carneiro, a lecturer at University College, London, and James J. Heckman, a professor at the University of Chicago, pointed out in a recent paper, "By many measures, since 1980, the quality of the U.S. workforce has stagnated, or its growth has slowed down dramatically."

If the United States is to meet the challenge posed by a truly global economy, it will have to insure that its scientists are the most creative, its business leaders the most innovative, and its workers the most highly skilled—not easy when other nations are seeking the same goals. A truly enlightened trade policy would involve increasing federal support for science at all levels of the education system; creating financial incentives for firms to pursue technological innovation; building up pre-school and mentoring initiatives that reduce dropout rates; expanding scholarships and visas to attract able foreign students and entrepreneurs to these shores; and encouraging the development of the arts. In short, insuring our prosperity involves investing in our human, social, and cultural capital. But don't expect to see that slogan on a campaign bumper sticker anytime soon. ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

DO NOT REMOVE FROM VISOR

BY BRUCE McCALL

Your new sport-utility vehicle (S.U.V.) should automatically roll over in sharp turns and in changes of direction. Important: Never open a door during a rollover situation; contact with pavement could cause paint scratches and scrapes, which are not covered under your limited warranty.

You will know that a rollover situation has occurred when all the blood rushes to your head and no sky is visible out the windows.

CAUTION: Driving at low speeds increases the risk of not rolling over. Always drive your new S.U.V. at double the posted speed limit.

Your new S.U.V. is designed to give you the choice of passing over the tops of smaller cars, motorcycles, and bicycles that are blocking your lane. Reminder: A small car may snag on the S.U.V.'s undercarriage during such a maneuver. If scraping noises persist, stop, step out of the vehicle, and examine the undercarriage for damage.

WARNING: Dragging a small car underneath your new S.U.V. could cause not only irritating noises but also friction between the S.U.V. and the road, which may slow you down. If a small car or other object has entangled itself in the chassis of your S.U.V., press firmly on the accelerator pedal and rapidly shift the transmission between Drive and Reverse to create a rocking motion until the small car is disengaged.

Your new S.U.V. utilizes the smallest possible total braking surface area for slow deceleration. Hard braking on rough or wet road surfaces should produce fishtailing and skidding. Important: In a skid, your S.U.V. will automatically spin in a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree loop or a series of loops. Do *not* attempt to correct this action by turning the steering wheel in the direction of the skid, as this could interrupt the spinning process and reduce collision risks.

As with any oversized and overweight vehicle, parking your new S.U.V. is easy if you disregard rearview mirrors and conventional "back and fill" strategies. Maneuver strictly by feel and by sound. Resistance encountered when backing into a parking space can be eliminated by your new S.U.V.'s overwhelming mass and engine power. Simply keep the accelerator pedal depressed until you feel no more resistance and all metallic sounds have ceased.

Your new S.U.V. is designed with the minimum number of safety features as standard equipment.

Advisory: There is no need to pick a fight with your spouse or drink three quarts of beer before driving your new S.U.V. Road rage is built in. Your new S.U.V. is designed to give the driver an illusion of supreme potency and invincibility at all times and in all traffic conditions. This can be diminished by courteous or passive driving habits.

Remember: The other driver is the enemy. Always pass on the right, block other vehicles from passing you, tailgate other vehicles until they yield or are pushed aside, avoid using the turn-signal indicator, and never slow down.

Fuel-Saving Warning: Maintaining a steady cruising speed below seventy m.p.h. will result in a higher miles-per-gallon figure than the S.U.V. average. *Danger:* Conserving fuel risks reducing running costs and maximizing benefits to the environment. If your fuel gauge does not move quickly from Full to Empty, your new S.U.V. is probably not burning fuel fast enough. This can result from persistently smooth, slow, careful driving. If the condition is not corrected by employing sudden stops and starts and by maintaining an average speed of at least one hundred m.p.h., see your authorized dealer. ♦

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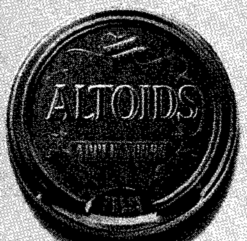

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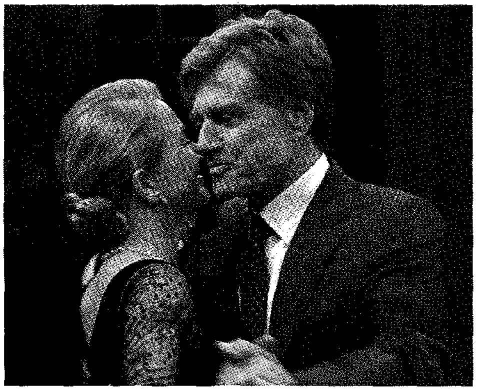

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PROFILES

DON'T CALL ME SIR

Don Rickles and the art of the insult.

BY ZOË HELLER

Earlier this year, on a winter evening in Atlantic City, Don Rickles left his suite in the Sands Hotel and, with his publicist, his road manager, and a hotel bodyguard, took the elevator down to the Copa Room. On a scouting mission earlier in the day, he had been pleased to discover that the Copa still has an old-school night-club setup, with tables and leopard-print upholstered booths and waitress service. "Most of the rooms these days, they've got theatre-style seating," he explained. "This is one of the last places where I can ask the maître d' to try to get a funny-looking guy up front—a big laugher, or someone who looks kind of odd."

In the dressing room, he changed into a shirt, a super-sized bow tie, and a robe that had been laid out for him by his valet, Kenny. He drank some coffee prepared by his road manager, Anthony Oppedisano—a dandyish man with a strawberry-blond quiff, known to his familiars as Tony O. And then, since it was still only seven-thirty and he wasn't due onstage until ten, Rickles sat down in front of a large flat-screen TV and began to grimace, in a slack-jawed, masculine fashion, at a football game.

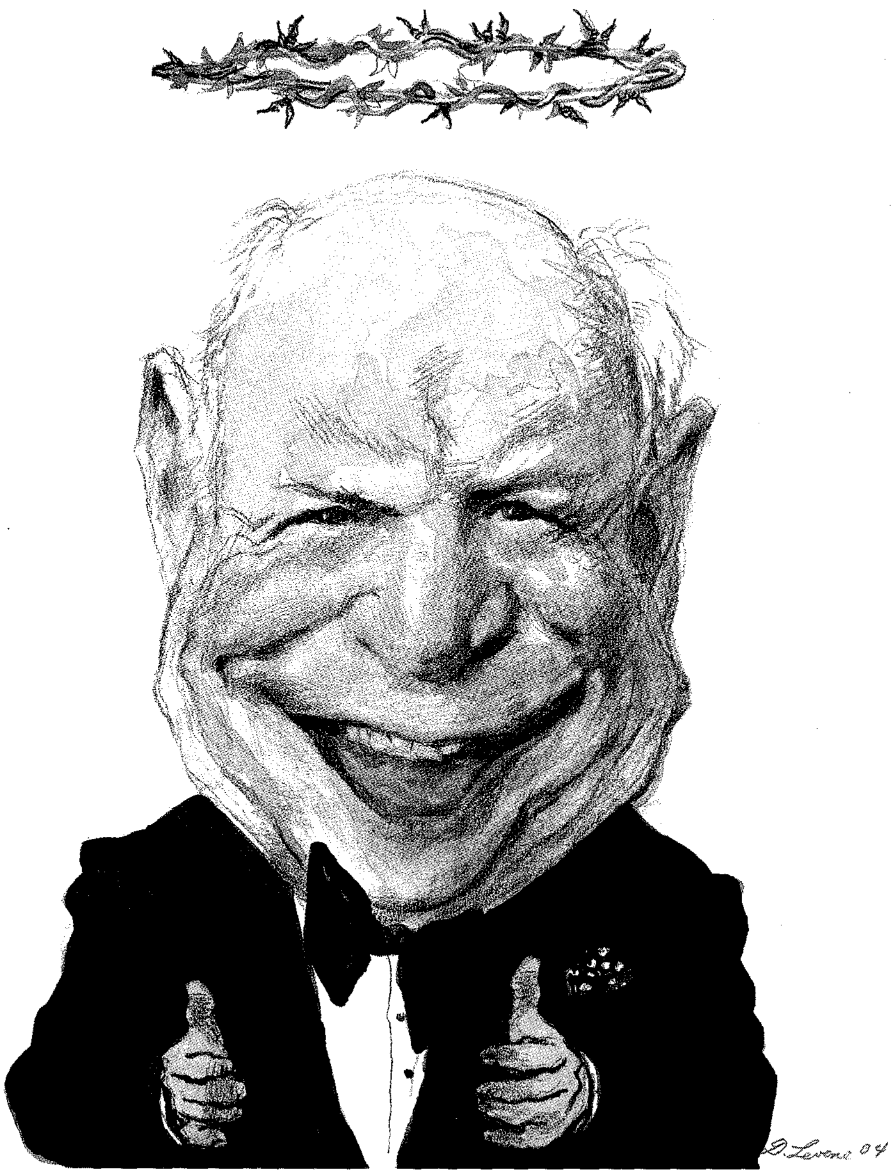
Rickles is a great believer in a languorous run-up to a performance. For the more than half century that he has been in show business, he has punched in early for work. "You know how a fighter always comes into the dressing room way before a fight?" he says. "That's me—I'm like a fighter." This year, he turned seventy-eight, and he will perform between seventy and ninety dates across the United States; at every one of them, barring disaster, he will arrive a good hour before whoever's doing the opening act.

At nine o'clock, Rickles, still in his robe, went out to the wings to watch a balladeer called Gene Ferrari perform. Ferrari, a sad-eyed Sicilian with hair the color of eggplant and a powerful, slightly distraught tenor voice, has been opening for Rickles for the past two years. He specializes in high-intensity love songs depicting the darker side of the romantic experience. It is safe to say that his interpretations of "Sometimes When We Touch" and "I Who Have Nothing" no longer hold many surprises for Rickles. But Rickles always comes out to watch him anyway—partly as a gesture of respect for a fellow-performer and partly as a chance to size up the audience. "I like to get the smell of them—see how they're reacting," he says.

After Ferrari had wound up his set with a thundering, ballpark-style rendition of "America the Beautiful," there was a three-minute break. Back in his dressing room, Rickles took off his robe and shouted "Pants!"—a signal to his valet to hustle forward with his tuxedo trousers. Then he walked out into the long, dingy-green hallway, past the clattering hotel kitchens, and up to one of the side doors of the Copa auditorium.

A trumpet blew the opening notes of the old Spanish song "Macarena" and, assuming his trademark expression of bulge-eyed irascibility, Rickles strode out, looking like a snapping turtle surfacing in a pond. The stage lights were flashing red. The audience was clapping in time with the music. His great hairless Brueghelian head gleamed in the spotlight. He struck various martial attitudes and flourished an invisible cape. The conceit of this entrance—unchanged since the early seventies—is that Rickles is a matador come to do battle in the bullring. "Rickles!" an elderly man in an open-neck shirt and crucifix shouted hoarsely above the general roar. "Rickles, we love you!"

Rickles moved toward the stage, pausing here and there to shake a man's hand or to fall upon an attractive woman in a mock-lascivious embrace. Once at his microphone, he ululated to the music in nonsense Spanish for a few moments,



Rickles isn't trying to charm a hostile world. He's coming at it with a baseball bat.

DAVID LEVINE

before breaking off to berate his band leader, Joe Mele, for some imaginary mistake. In short order, he turned his attention to the audience and began to rain derision on them in the prewar New York accent of a Dead End Kid.

"Hello, sir," he said, looking down at a man in the front row. "Is that your wife?" He paused. "Oh, well. Keep your chin up." "Jesus Christ!" he exclaimed, stopping short in front of a fat man (the maître d' had evidently done as requested). "How much d'you weigh? Two hundred and seventy-four pounds? Yeah . . . on the left side of your ass, you do!" He smiled sweetly at an old lady—"Hello, dear"—and leaned down to shake her hand. "Oof, what did you have for dinner tonight? Fish?"

There has always been a strong tradition within Jewish comedy of what one might call underdog humor—the voice of the nebbishy little guy using his wits to fend off or beguile or distract a hostile world. Rickles, it must be understood, has no truck with this tradition. He is neither underdog nor nebbish. He is a tough Jew—a confronter, an imposer, a hawk. The aggression that is generally understood to be the subtext of all standup acts is rendered entirely explicit in his performance: aggression is, in a sense, the subject of his performance. He isn't trying to charm a hostile world. He is coming at it with a baseball bat.

"Don't call me sir," he bellowed at a young man in the audience. "King Jew will do fine." "You"—he pointed at a woman—"you're Italian, right? I knew it. None of your clothes match. Nah, but really, we like the Italians. We do. We gotta kiss their asses, so's the Jews can have ice."

The racial and sexual stereotypes in which Rickles trades have, for the most part, a distinctly period flavor. Poles are dumb Polacks. Gay men are mincing fairies. Women are broads with "good lamps." Many of his caricatures—his goose-stepping Krauts and bucktoothed Japs—are so antique as to be positively quaint. (Really, when was the last time you saw an Italian delivering ice?) But he is still capable of creating a scandalized frisson with the audacity of his incorrectness. When a young Indian man in the Copa Room identified himself as a database analyst, Rickles gave a mournful little roll of his eyes and remarked, more in sorrow than in anger, "You people come out of the jungle and take all our good jobs."

The stated intention of this genial racism is a liberal one. Rickles is an equal-opportunity offender, the idea goes—a kind of workingman's Lenny Bruce—deploying stereotype to demonstrate that we are all different and all equal. For many years, he ended his act with a prayer that he would one day see "all bigots vanish from the earth." In the sixties, when Rickles first started appearing on television, his angry style was a startling aberration in a medium dominated by gosh-darn-it good cheer. But equally startling was the progressive message underlying his faux misanthropy. The black comedian Bernie Mac, a longtime fan of Rickles, who has had him as a guest star on his television show, recalls what a radical spectacle Rickles presented to him as a boy, when he first saw him on a Dean Martin celebrity roast: "He was not afraid to cross the line. He attacked! He had no respect for any person, and he was doing his thing to everybody—black, white, Jewish, Asian. I fell in love with him. I saw the joke, you know? My family saw the joke. My old grandfather, who came from the South—even he got Rickles. He was like, 'This mofo is crazy.' "

Of course, not everybody has seen the joke, or cared to acknowledge the humanity beneath Rickles's dyspepsia. In a long career of making cracks about "needing the blacks so we can have cotton in the drugstore," he has inevitably earned some enemies. The rapper LL Cool J, in his memoir "I Make My Own Rules," describes being at a birthday gala for Quincy Jones, attended by Sidney Poitier, Oprah Winfrey, and others, at which

Rickles made a fulsome toast, congratulating Jones on the beauty of his wife and on the enormity of his professional success, but concluding that, in spite of everything, he was "still a black man." "Mr. Jones laughed it off and Mr. Poitier just shook his head and said, 'Tack-y. Very tack-y!' That was putting it mildly."

As Rickles has grown older, he has become quicker to tip his audience off to his good intentions. His act has a lot of misty-water-colored reminiscing and lachrymose toast-making these days. ("I wish for you, my friends, that for years to come you have what I have—people who care.") He first began singing songs like the vaudeville-flavored "I'm a Nice Guy" and the hair-raisingly mawkish "(I'll Trade You) Laughter for Love" in the late sixties, when he moved up from being a lounge comic to working the big rooms in Las Vegas and felt he needed "something classy" to seal his new status. But after many years of functioning as sentimental relief—little rest stops of warmheartedness in a more general barrage of animosity—the songs have now leaked their twinkliness into the rest of the act, colonizing it with a rosy glow:

I love to do what I do
To share this laughter I give
For just a little love from you.

After the show in the Copa Room, Rickles's dressing room quickly filled up with a group of retired Atlantic City cops, who knew Rickles from the old days when he had a regular gig at the Resorts. The air in the room was heavy with the smell of clashing colognes. ("Jeez, it's the Gardens of Allah in here," someone murmured upon entering.) When Rickles appeared, wearing a cashmere sweater and slacks—and bringing his own heavy dose of Paco Rabanne to the fragrant mix—he greeted the cops warmly. "These guys used to take care of me," he said as he hugged them. Tony O. fixed him a vodka. (Tony O. was Frank Sinatra's road manager for many years, and, particularly when preparing beverages, he comports himself with the terse dignity befitting that distinguished employment history.) Shortly thereafter, Rickles's wife, Barbara, a handsome, carefully coiffed woman in a raspberry-pink sweater set, arrived. In his act, Rickles frequently depicts his wife as the supreme Jewish American Princess—a woman who "likes to lie in bed, signalling ships with her jewelry." Although the real-life Mrs. Rickles does indeed sport an impressive smattering of diamonds, she is an altogether more dignified character than the jokes would suggest. She met Rickles some forty years ago, when she was working as his agent's secretary, and in company she tends to listen to her husband's patter with the slightly weary half smile common to the spouses of professional clowns. "She's heard all my jokes now," Rickles admits. "But I can still make her laugh. Late at night when we're in bed, telling stories, I can get her hysterical."

In the dressing room, various people who had been hanging around outside, waiting for an audience, began to trickle in. A young man who was appearing as Buddy Holly in the "Legends" show over at Bally's Claridge Tower clasped Rickles's hand reverently. "We in the business are so grateful to you for your showmanship," he said. A couple from Connecticut posed for pictures and spoke about their granddaughter. At some point, the subject of Gene Ferrari came up. Ferrari had mentioned in his act that night that he used to have very long hair and that Rickles had persuaded him to cut it off. Was that true? "Sure," Rickles growled. "Are you kidding? I mean, c'mon . . . he looked ridiculous. Like some kind of fag pirate." The policemen guffawed appreciatively.

Rickles is not one of those entertainers who resent the expectation that he be funny offstage. On the contrary, he seems eager to get laughs wherever he can. (And if the laughter is insufficiently robust he is not beyond inquiring yearningly, "That was funny, right?") "Don likes to train his instrument," the comedian Bob Newhart says. Newhart and Rickles and their wives have been going on vacation together for several decades, and Newhart says that by now he has seen his friend do shtick in most of the European countries. "You'll be in Venice or someplace," he says, "and Don'll instruct you, 'Don't talk to anyone, or they'll never leave us alone.' Then the next thing you know you're in Harry's Bar and he's turning around, chatting up the American tourists in the next booth."

Rickles claims to have inherited his exuberance from his mother. The noisy, indomitable Etta Rickles, whom he sometimes refers to as "the Jewish Patton," once greeted a group of bosses at a casino with the words "Good evening, gentlemen. Now take out your guns and put 'em on the table." Growing up in Jackson Heights, Queens, Rickles was a self-conscious child, he says—especially shy around "important people"—and he found his mother's garrulity embarrassing. "Any place we'd go, she'd be, 'HOW ARE YOU, SOPHIE, AWFULLY NICE TO SEE YOU.' She'd talk loud on the subway. I always thought people were looking at us. But then, as I grew older, I realized that that was a part of me—that I was that way, too."

After serving in the Navy during the Second World War—an experience he refers to only in the glibbest comic terms ("I was in the jungle with a bunch of Japs, running around calling, 'Whe-e-re are you, Jew?' ")—Rickles decided he wanted to be an actor. He enrolled in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, in Manhattan. But after graduating, in 1948—in the same class as Jason Robards—he had no luck finding work. For a few years, he did impressions and jokes at synagogue functions and bingo parlors. He sold makeup and pots and pans out of his car. He did a stint as a tummler in the Catskills. He even tried, briefly, to become an insurance salesman, like his father, Max. ("I was always great at the pitch," he recalls, "but I could never do the closing.")

Shortly after his father died, in 1953, Rickles moved out to Los Angeles to take a job as a comedian with Will Osbourne's band. His mother moved with him. "We were always very close," he says. "Joined at the hip, really." For the first couple of years in California, Rickles and his mother shared a one-room apartment with a curtain across it. Although they later moved to grander accommodations, they continued to live together until Rickles got married to Barbara, at the age of thirty-eight. Etta moved out then—to the apartment next door.

It was in Los Angeles that Rickles's act—or, rather, his anti-act—began to come together. "To this day, I can't tell jokes," he says. "I can do situations that become jokes, but I can't do jokes per se. So I was doing impressions badly and I was doing jokes badly, and after a while I began to look at people and say, 'Don't you find that funny? It was damn funny! Tell me, why are you wearing that tie? It's all wrong, you know that, don't you?' And that became a bit. People started to laugh."

Rickles is not a great aficionado of comedy history, and he has little interest in theorizing about what makes a joke work. Bob Newhart says that he and Rickles have never had a technical conversation about their trade. ("I might say, 'D'you think that guy's funny?' and he might say, 'Sure, he's funny,' or 'No, I don't get him, either.' But that's as far as it goes.") If pressed to name comics he admires, Rickles will concede that Shecky Greene was pretty good, but he declines to name any favorites among the younger generation of standups. "There's nobody who I think, Oo! I gotta see," he says. He cites no particular influences on his own style, but he does not seem much interested in claiming himself as an original, either. "I don't say I was the first," he once told a reporter, "because, who knows, maybe there was a guy out in Minnesota doing it before me."

To refer to Rickles, as people often have, as "the father of insult comedy" is perhaps a little far-fetched. If insult comedy has a father at all, it is more likely to have been one of the old vaudevillians or a medieval court jester. Even in modern times, there were performers before Rickles who used insult as their central device—most notably, a rumpled, slightly depressive comic of the forties and fifties called Fat Jack Leonard. (It was Leonard who once told Ed Sullivan, "Don't worry, Ed—someday you'll find yourself . . . and you'll be terribly disappointed.") But Rickles is certainly to be credited with taking insult comedy to an unprecedented level of ferocity. Some of the abuse he coined in the Los Angeles night clubs of the fifties was essentially meaningless—an abstraction of insult—as with the snarling admonition "Don't be a hockey puck." Some of it had a crazy, almost poetic specificity. "I don't know what this is all about, you annoying woman," he would shout at an unsuspecting female in his audience. "Get a job at a fruit stand. Say, didn't I see you during the war hanging around the embarkation point in a torn sweater?" All of it was faster and nastier and more confrontational than anything people had seen on a stage before. Strip away the personal charm and the strong strain of surrealist whimsy in his humor, and the line of descent from Rickles to the ultra-aggressive shock comedy of Andrew Dice Clay and Sam Kinison is clear.

One night in 1957, when Rickles was performing at a small club in Hollywood called the Slate Brothers, Frank Sinatra and his retinue came in. As they were ushered to a table, the story has it, an awkward hush fell over the room. Would Rickles mock Sinatra? "Make yourself at home, Frank," Rickles called

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The Economist

out. "Hit somebody." There was a terrifying pause, and then Sinatra began to laugh. "I saw you in that movie 'From Here to Eternity,' " Rickles went on. "I gotta tell you, the cannon's acting was great." Sinatra kept laughing. He laughed until he fell off his chair, whereupon Rickles scowled at him and said, "Get off the floor, Frank—it looks fruity."

So Rickles's legend as a dauntless pricker of pomposity was born. "Nobody ever dared with Frank," Rickles says, "because he had such mood swings and you never knew how he was going to react. But I could tell the minute I saw him that he was going to be in my corner." Sinatra turned out to be a loyal fan and booster. Soon it became a perverse honor, in entertainment circles, to be singled out for Rickles's abuse.

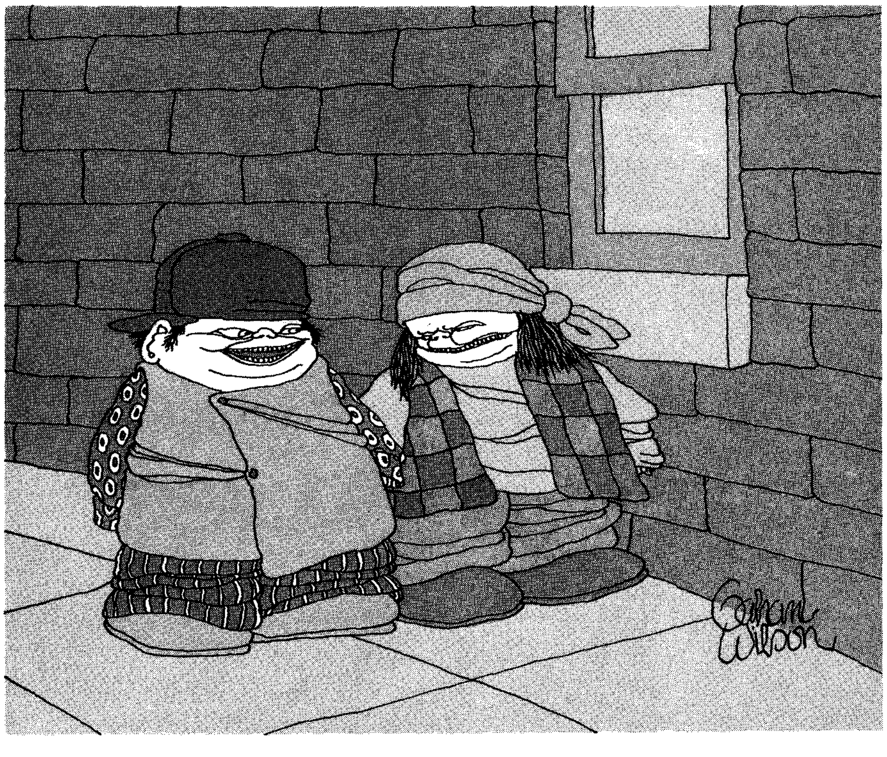
Over the years, he has played the licensed fool to all manner of touchy grandees, from Barbra Streisand to Elvis Presley, from King Hussein of Jordan to Presidents Reagan, Bush, and Clinton. (Jimmy Carter, he says, was the only President who declined to see him when he visited the White House: "He went to another room. Left his sweater on the chair.") Rickles is the man who appeared on Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show" for the first time in 1965 and greeted the king of late night with the words "Hello, dummy." He is the man who, at a British Royal Gala attended by Princess Margaret in 1980, derided the Queen of England. "I was up there saying how boring the Queen was, how she got on my nerves," he remembers. "I'm making jokes about her jewelry and stuff. The Americans are laughing their asses off, but the British guys are kind of staring. Show's over—I go sit down. Newhart's there, and he says to me out the corner of his mouth, 'Don't worry, I got the bags packed. We can go straight to the airport.' Then this butler comes over. 'Mr. Rickles?' he says. 'Her Royal Highness would like to see you—now.' Well, Newhart's looking at me like I'm going to be beheaded. I go over to the Princess's table and I say, 'Good evening, Your Majesty.' 'Oh, no,' she says, 'you can call me Ma'am.' 'O.K.,' I say. 'I did enjoy your performance,' she says. 'I couldn't follow everything you were saying, but it was jolly good. You're awfully quick, aren't you? Awfully quick. Tell me . . . are you a Jew?' "

The standard explanation for how Rickles has escaped being beheaded all these years is that he is never really hateful—just a man with a childlike compulsion to say what is on his mind. "It's like when you're having a cocktail party at your house," Bob Newhart says, "and your kid comes over to say, 'That fat lady in the red dress wants another Martini.' Rickles is that kid. He never had that kind of honesty beaten out of him." Kenneth Tynan put it another way. "Rickles," he once wrote, "is the unchained Id."

The trouble with such accounts is that they underestimate the wiliness and control that Rickles brings to bear on his effusions. A truly unchained id would not, one suspects, be a very entertaining thing. There is a lot that Rickles does not—and will not—say onstage. He won't do blue jokes—except of the very mildest variety. And he never uses a curse word stronger than "damn." He also tailors his ad-hominem insults to what he thinks individual audience members can bear. Sitting in his overheated beige suite the morning after the Copa show (another flat-screen TV turned on, a buffet on the coffee table), he recalled how he had mocked one particularly unattractive man in the audience the night before. "He was thrilled when I made fun of him," he said. "I could see he loved me when I walked offstage. But, I mean, I could have done much worse. He was weird-looking. Really Frankenstein. I could have made him a schmuck—but the point is I would never do that."

Rickles's gift, it would seem, lies not in ignoring the promptings of his superego but in his ability to give a highly stylized impression of doing so. When Rickles talks about the casino owners he used to work for ("People like to say they were the Mob, but I don't like that word. All I know is they were businessmen who ran the casinos and they ran them very well. . . . They were good to me") or about Lucille Ball, on whose show he appeared several times ("She was a sweet lady but tough if you got out of line—she was the kind of lady I minded my 'p's and 'q's with"), or about Elvis, who once interrupted Rickles's Vegas act to recite a poem ("I didn't need it, but what was I gonna do? His career was winding down, but he was still a big headliner"), it is a cautious, conservative spirit one hears, not an anarchic one. His reckless-seeming mockery of the high and mighty has always been rooted in an exquisite, courtierlike sensitivity to hierarchical distinctions.

"Don is a comic, remember," Joan Rivers says. "And in his generation com-



"You know you've got it right when your parents can't look at you without wincing!"

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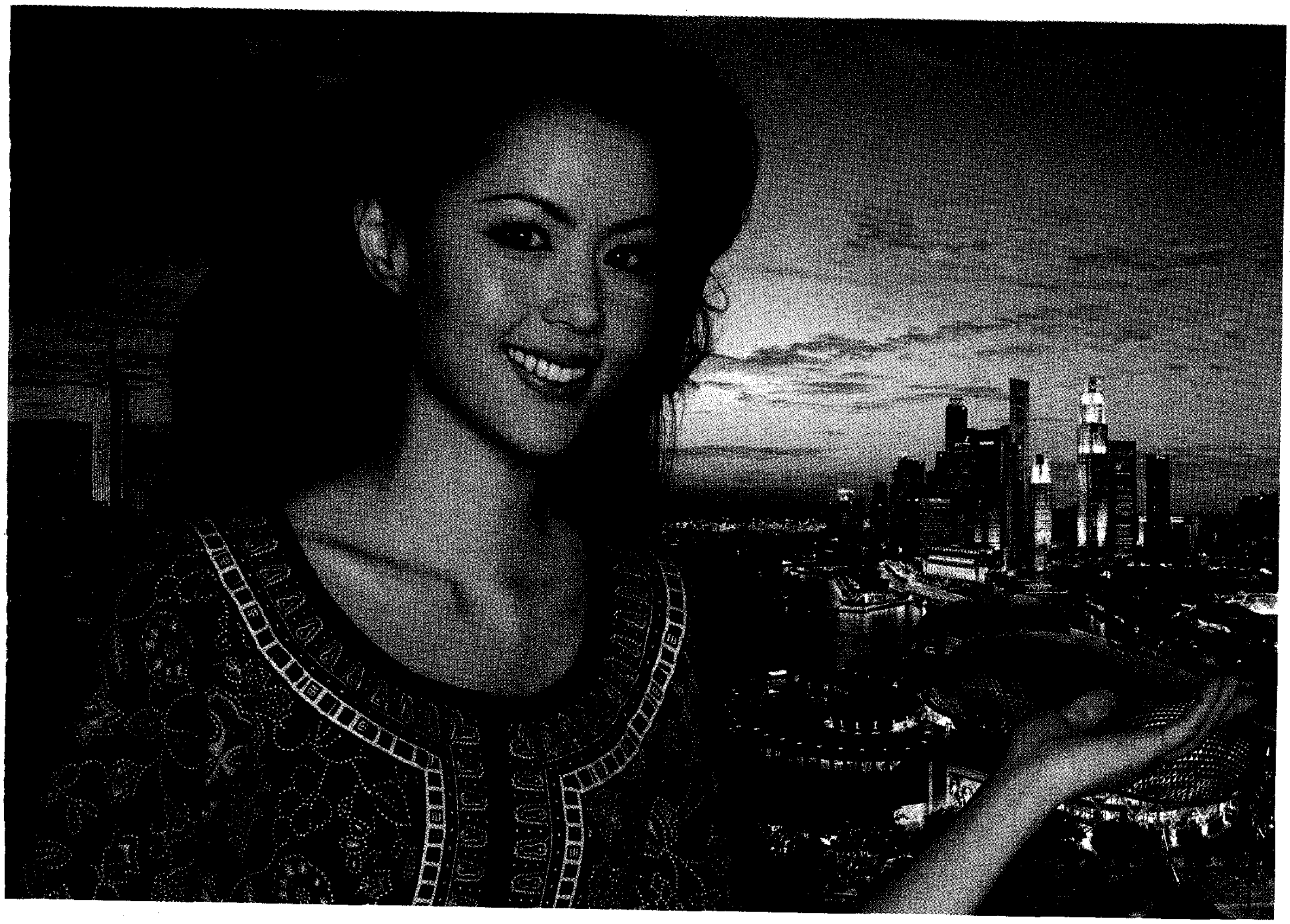

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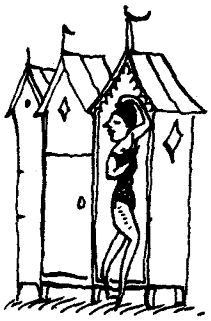
ics were always the low men on the totem pole."

"I have always respected authority," Rickles says.

Rickles still lives in Los Angeles, and in late February he taped an interview with his old friend Larry King at the CNN studios there. Afterward, he stopped off for a pre-dinner drink at the St. Regis Hotel bar. "I love Larry," he said, as his publicist went off to order him a vodka. "He interviews the big shots—the President of this one and the Prime Minister of that one—but underneath it all he's just an old Jewish guy who wants a corned-beef sandwich." Rickles was in a buoyant mood. Just that week, he had signed a deal to co-star with William Macy and Ned Beatty in a television remake of the Jackie Gleason movie "The Wool Cap." "It's a very good cast," he said. "I mean, Bill Macy! Did you see him in 'Seabiscuit'?"



Rickles's career as an actor probably constitutes the one significant disappointment of his professional life. Television tended to reduce him to a mere bully figure, and his various attempts to create his own comedy series—"Kibbe Hates Fitch" (1964), "The Don Rickles Show" (1972), "C.P.O. Sharkey" (1976)—were all more or less failures. Even in his appearances on variety specials, he often suffered from not being allowed to ad lib. "I was with Bob Hope on a million shows, and he was always scared," Rickles once said. "We'd be in rehearsal, I'd do something off the script, and everybody would fall on the floor. He'd look at me real serious and say, 'Is that the way you're going to do it?' And I'd go, 'Well, Bob, they're laughing, aren't they?' And he'd go, 'No, just read the card and do it the way I wrote it.' It got to the point where I'd say, 'Good evening, Bob,' and he'd make a face. I'd have to go and sit in his office and practice: 'Good evening, Bob. Is that O.K.?' 'Try it again.' 'Hi, Bob.' 'That's a little better.' He treated me like a moron."

Rickles did not have much luck in movies either. After a promising start in 1958, with a part in "Run Silent, Run Deep," starring Clark Gable, there was nothing but a string of roles in low-budget teen movies until "Kelly's Heroes" (1970). A video that he released in 1975 called "Buy This Tape, You Hockey Puck" gives a poignant glimpse of his frustrated thespian aspirations. In among excerpts from his Vegas act, various comic skits, and a big musical number with Michelle Lee, there is a jarringly sober ten-minute scene from "Inherit the Wind," with Rickles playing the impassioned William Jennings Bryan character and Jack Klugman playing the Clarence Darrow character. "I was never handled correctly, in my opinion," Rickles says. "My acting career should have gone further than what it did."

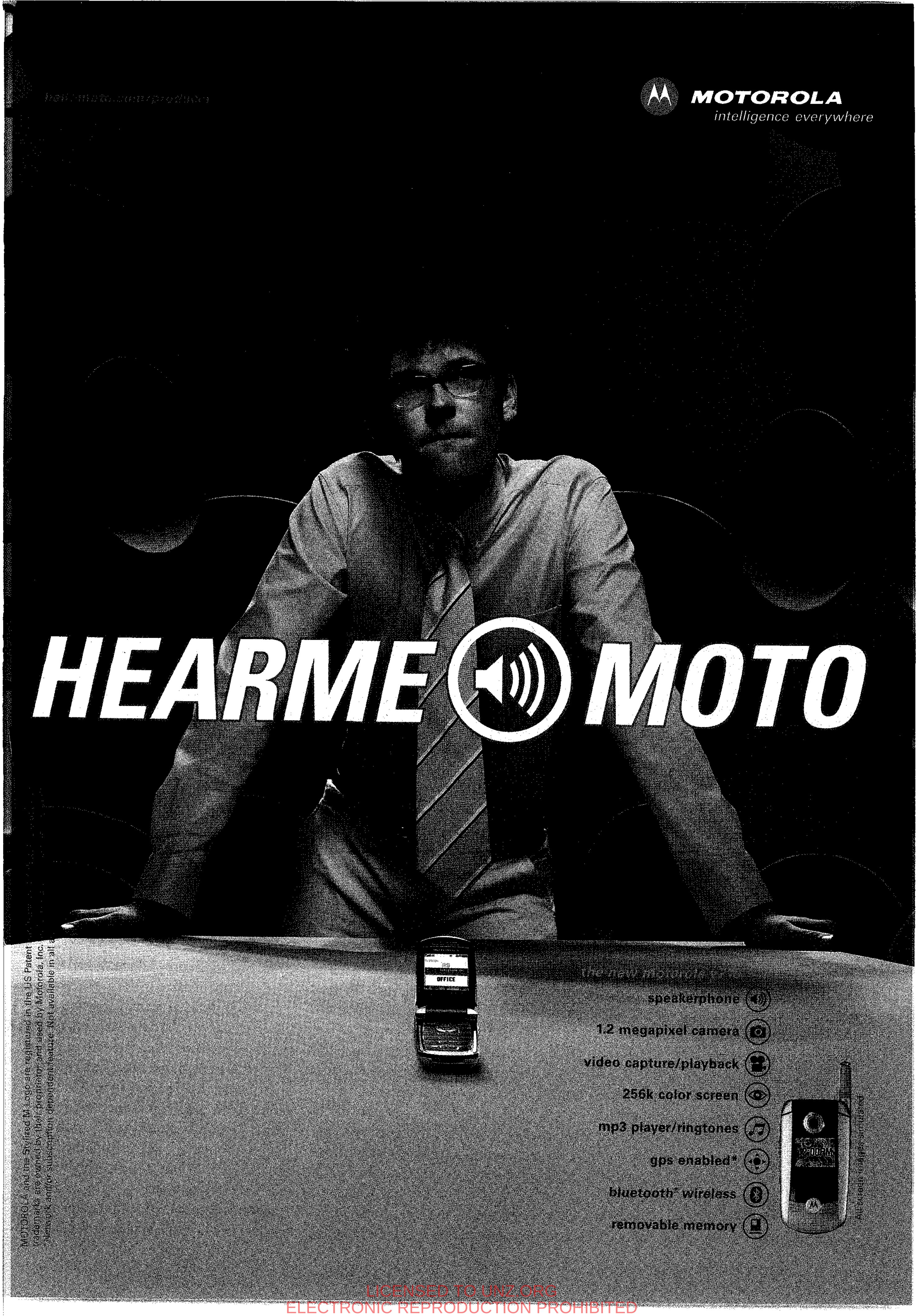
He has not given up on acting yet. In the mid-nineties, he enjoyed a flurry of attention when he was hired to supply the voice for Mr. Potato Head in "Toy Story" and to play a casino manager in Martin Scorsese's "Casino." And he remains very much available for offers. "I'm already worrying about learning my lines for 'The Wool Cap,'" he said at the St. Regis. "It's a big part. I mean, if I was doing it with Lou Schwartz, I wouldn't get that excited, but when Bill Macy wants me . . ."

Rickles's enthusiasm for show business has proved remarkably hardy. Penn Gillette—the tall half of Penn and Teller—recalls seeing Rickles's act for the first time in 1976, at the Latin Casino, outside Philadelphia. "When he finished his last joke and went offstage, I could see him standing there in the wings," he said. "He had his head down and his fists clenched, sweat pouring off him, and he was kind of shouting and growling to himself. I mean, he'd played this place maybe two hundred times before and it was a weekday, you know, and he'd been in the business for twenty-five years. There was no reason for this to be a huge powerful moment, but somehow it was. He was still totally committed."

Thirty years on, Rickles has yet to show any sign of jadedness. He has the usual physical complaints of a septuagenarian. He suffers from diabetes; he has a bad hip and dodgy knees; he is prone to gout. The venues he plays are not the glamorous places they once were. "The ladies used to wear jewelry and furs to a show, and the men wore suits," he says. "Today, they come in their underwear." Even the big casino customers are smaller than they used to be. When Rickles attended a "meet and greet" with the high rollers at the Sands in January, he and Tony O., in their jackets and ties and cufflinks and cologne, were by far the nattiest dressers in the room. The gamblers wore sweatpants and anoraks and gnawed on complimentary crab "lollipops." "This is the highlight of my career, being here at this buck-and-a-half luau," Rickles told the crowd.

And yet he's not ready to retire. He has well-appointed homes in Century City and Malibu. He has two children and two grandchildren. But a lifetime of performing has left him with a limited appetite for domesticity. "I live for the nights," he says.

A decade ago, the requests for him to perform were beginning to wind down, but recently, with the boom in Native American-owned casinos, things have picked up again. In the St. Regis bar, he outlined his schedule. He'd just done some dates with Tony Danza in Florida. Next, he would do a mini-tour with Joan Rivers. There would also be a quick trip to Toronto for a men's-club convention. "It'll be just a one-night thing," he said. "They pay a lot of money for it, but they're the toughest things to do—the private functions. These same people, they'll come to see me in Vegas and they'll be afraid. But with all their friends, on their own ground, they're shouting at the waiter in the middle of the act to get them some pretzels. It makes it more difficult. I know in my mind the Toronto trip is going to be a pain in the ass. Because you get there and they all take you to one side and it's like, 'Make fun of Charlie, he's a pain in the ass.' Or 'Make fun of Lou, he never makes love to his wife.' I like to go out cold turkey, not knowing anybody, and do it on my own. Instead, I got to follow instructions—'Jack, you are a moron and your brother is a jerk.' And they're WHAA! They fall on the floor. Believe me, the joke is not that funny. But for them it is. They go crazy. Under the table. It's annoying. I'm thinking to myself, When is this going to be over? It bores me, you know?" He shrugged and rattled the ice in his vodka. "Then again," he said, "I'm glad they're laughing." ♦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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE TERROR WEB

Were the Madrid bombings part of a new, far-reaching jihad being plotted on the Internet?

BY LAWRENCE WRIGHT

For much of Spain's modern history, the organization that has defined its experience with terror is ETA, which stands for Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna (Basque Homeland and Liberty). ETA, which was founded in 1959, has a clear political goal: it wants to set up a separate nation, comprising the Basque provinces, in northern Spain, and parts of southern France. Although ETA has killed some eight hundred people, it has developed a reputation for targeting, almost exclusively, politicians, security officials, and journalists. Over the years, the terrorists and the Spanish police have come to a rough understanding about the rules of engagement. "They don't commit attacks on the working class, and they always call us before an explosion, telling us where the bomb is situated," an intelligence official in the Spanish National Police told me recently in Madrid. "If they place a bomb in a backpack on a train, there will be a cassette tape saying, 'This bag is going to explode. Please leave the train.' " And so on March 11th, when the first reports arrived of mass casualties resulting from explosions on commuter trains, Spanish intelligence officials assumed that ETA had made an appalling mistake.

At 7:37 A.M., as a train was about to enter Madrid's Atocha station, three bombs blasted open the steel cars, sending body parts through the windows of nearby apartments. The station is in Madrid's center, a few blocks from the Prado Museum. Within seconds, four bombs exploded on another train, five hundred and fifty yards from the station. The bombs killed nearly a hundred people. Had the explosions occurred when the trains were inside the station, the fatalities might have

tallied in the thousands; a quarter of a million people pass through Atocha every workday. The trains at that hour were filled with students and young office workers who live in public housing and in modest apartment complexes east of the city. Many were immigrants, who had been drawn by the Spanish economic boom.

As emergency crews rushed to the scene, two more bombs demolished a train at the El Pozo del Tío Raimundo station, three miles away. By then, José María Aznar, the Prime Minister, had learned of the attacks, which were taking place at the end of an uneventful political campaign. The conservative Popular Party, which Aznar headed, was leading the Socialists by four and a half points in the polls, despite the overwhelming opposition of the Spanish population to the country's participation in the war in Iraq. It was Thursday morning; the election would take place on Sunday.

At seven-forty-two, one minute after the El Pozo bomb, a final bomb went off, on a train at the suburban Santa Eugenia station. Emergency workers arrived to find mangled bodies littering the tracks. The Spanish had never seen anything like this—the worst ETA atrocity, in 1987, killed twenty-one shoppers in a Barcelona grocery store. At Santa Eugenia, there were so many wounded that rescue crews ripped up the benches in the waiting area to use as stretchers. In all, there were a hundred and ninety-one fatalities and sixteen hundred injuries. It was the most devastating act of terrorism in European history, except for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Aznar, who survived an ETA car bomb in 1995, had made the elimination of the group his biggest priority. His security forces had decimated ETA's ranks, but they were aware that remnants of the organization were attempting to stage a retaliatory attack in Madrid. The previous Christmas Eve, police had arrested two ETA commanders who had planted backpack bombs on trains, and in February the Civil Guard intercepted an ETA van that was headed to the capital carrying eleven hundred pounds of explosives. A top Spanish police official, a political appointee, told me that authorities had planned a major strike against ETA for March 12th, the last official day of campaigning. Such a blow might have boosted Aznar's party at the polls. ETA, however, had seemingly struck first.

At 10:50 A.M., police in Alcalá de Henares received a call from a witness who pointed them to a boxy white Renault van

Before the bombings, Al Qaeda was not seen as a threat to Spain. "We never believed we were a real target," a police official said.

that had been left that morning at the train station. "At the beginning, we didn't pay too much attention to it," an investigator told me. "Then we saw that the license plate didn't correspond to the van." Even that clue, though, struck a false note. When ETA operatives steal a car, they match it with license plates from the same model car. It had been years since ETA had made such an elementary mistake.

The lack of warning, the many casualties, the proletarian background of many of the victims, and ETA's quick disavowal of the crime all suggested that there was reason to question the assignment of blame. The police no longer considered ETA capable of carrying off such an elaborate attack. Moreover, the telephones of known ETA collaborators were bugged. "The bad guys were calling each other, saying, 'Was it us? It's craziness!' " a senior intelligence official said.

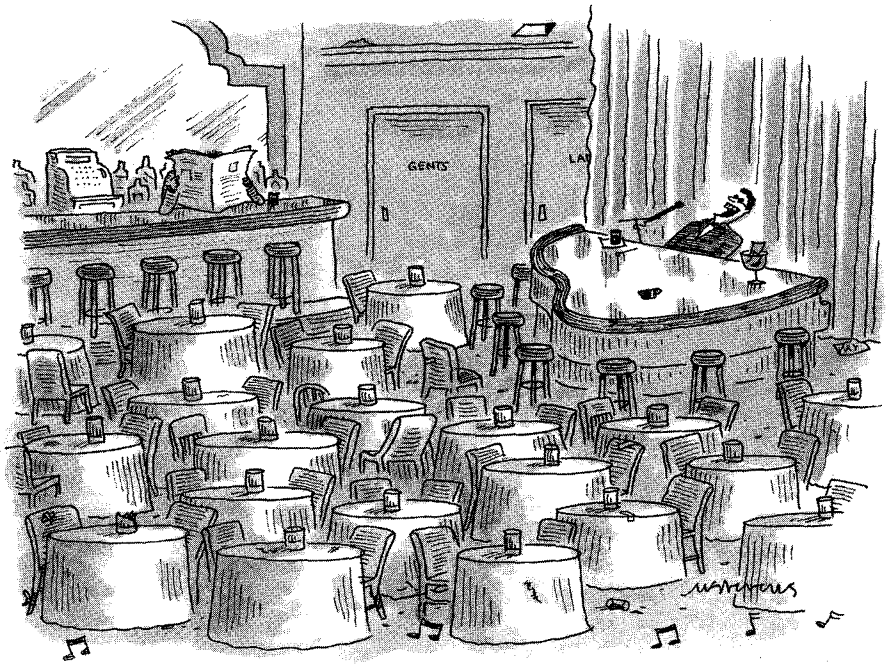
That afternoon, detectives looked more carefully at the white van. They collected fingerprints, and under the passenger seat they found a plastic bag with seven detonators matching the type used in the bombings. There were cigarette butts, a woman's wig, and a Plácido Domingo cassette. In the tape player was a different recording—it bore Arabic inscriptions, and turned out to be Koranic recitations for religious novices. By that time, police had learned that the explosive used in the bombings was Goma-2, which ETA no longer used. "We told the government that there was something odd, that it was possibly not ETA," the intelligence official told me.

That evening, however, Aznar called the editors of Spain's newspapers. "ETA is behind the attacks," he assured them. Then he called José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, his Socialist opponent, to tell him about the van with the Arabic tape; at the same time, he insisted that "there is no doubt who did the attacks."

The case broke open in the middle of the night, when a young police officer, sorting through belongings recovered from the trains, opened a sports bag and discovered twenty-two pounds of Goma-2, surrounded by nails and screws. Two wires ran from a blue mobile phone to a detonator. It wasn't clear why the bomb had failed to explode.

Police officers realized that a chip inside the phone would contain a record of recently dialled numbers. By tracing these calls, they were quickly able to map out a network of young Arab immigrants, many of whom were known to Spanish intelligence. Data stored on the chip revealed that a calling plan had been set up at a small telephone and copy shop in Lavapiés, a working-class neighborhood near the Atocha station. The store was owned by Jamal Zougam, a Moroccan who had previously been under surveillance because of alleged connections to Al Qaeda. He was soon arrested.

Information began leaking to the public about the direction of the investigation. By Friday afternoon, demonstrators were standing in front of the Atocha station, holding signs that linked the tragedy to the war in Iraq. It was clear that the election would swing on the question of whether Islamists or ETA terrorists were responsible for the bombings. That day, the Interior Minister, Ángel Acebes, insisted publicly that ETA was the prime suspect—even though the police were now certain that ETA was not directly involved.



"There's no business like show business . . ."

At twilight, some eleven million Spaniards assembled around the country to protest the violence. In rainy Madrid, the umbrellas stretched for miles down the Paseo del Prado. The anger and grief of the marchers were compounded by confusion about the investigation. "I walked with a million people in Madrid's streets," Diego López Garrido, a Socialist deputy in the Spanish congress, told me. "Many people were saying, 'Who is the author of these attacks?' And they wondered, 'Why is the government lying to us?' "

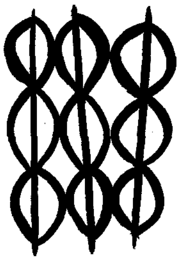
The day of the bombings, analysts at the Forsvarets Forskningsinstitutt, a Norwegian think tank near Oslo, retrieved a document that they had noticed on an Islamist Web site the previous December. At the time, the document had not made a big impression, but now, in light of the events in Madrid, it read like a terrorist road map. Titled "Jihadi Iraq: Hopes and Dangers," it had been prepared by a previously unknown entity called the Media Committee for the Victory of the Iraqi People (Mujahideen Services Center).

The document, which is forty-two pages long and appears to be the work of several anonymous authors, begins with the proposition that although Coalition forces in Iraq, led by America, could not be defeated by a guerrilla insurgency, individual partners of the Coalition could be persuaded to depart, leaving America more vulnerable and discouraged as casualties increased and the expenses became insupportable. Three countries—Britain, Spain, and Poland—formed the European backbone of the Coalition. Poland appeared to be the most resolute, because the populace largely agreed with the government's decision to enter Iraq. In Britain, the war was generally deplored. "Before the war, in February, about a million people went out on a huge march filling the streets of London," the document notes. "This was the biggest march of political protest in the history of Britain." But the authors suggest that the British would not withdraw unless the casualty count sharply increased.

Spain, however, presented a striking opportunity. The war was almost universally unpopular. Aznar had plunged his country into Iraq without seeking a consensus, unlike other Coalition leaders. "If the disparity between the government and the people were at the same percentage rate in Britain, then the Blair government would fall," the author of this section observes. The reason Aznar had not yet been ousted, the author claims, was that Spain is an immature democracy and does not have a firm tradition of holding its rulers accountable. Right-wing Spanish voters also tended to be more loyal and organized than their leftist counterparts. Moreover, the number of Spanish casualties in Iraq was less than a dozen. "In order to force the Spanish government to withdraw from Iraq, the resistance should deal painful blows to its forces," the writer proposes. "It is necessary to make utmost use of the upcoming general election in Spain in March next year. We think that the Spanish government could not tolerate more than two, maximum three blows, after which it will have to withdraw as a result of popular pressure. If its troops still remain in Iraq after these blows, the victory of the Socialist Party is almost secured, and the withdrawal of the Spanish forces will be on its electoral program." Once Spain pulled out of Iraq, the author theorizes, the pressure on Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, to do the same might be unbearable—"and hence the domino tiles would fall quickly."

The document specifies that the attacks would be aimed at Spanish forces within Iraq—there is no call for action in Spain. Nonetheless, the authors' reading of the Western political calendar struck the Norwegian researchers as particularly keen. "The relation between the text and the bombings is unclear," Thomas Hegghammer, a researcher at Forsvarets Forskningsinstitutt, told me. "But, without the text, we would still be asking, 'Is this a coincidence?' "

That day, Hegghammer forwarded a copy of the document to Haizam Amirah Fernández, a colleague at Madrid's Real Instituto Elcano. Amirah was shocked. Until now, the announced goals of Al Qaeda had been mainly parochial, directed at purging the Islamic world, especially Saudi Arabia, of Western influences; overturning the established Arabic governments and restoring the clerical rule of the ancient caliphate; and purifying Islam by returning it to the idealized time of the Prophet. In an audiotape aired on the Arabic satellite channel Al Jazeera in February, 2003, Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda, had identified Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen as "the most qualified regions for liberation." (Iraq was notably absent from his list.) And yet he offered no political platform—no plan, for instance, for governing Saudi Arabia on the morning after the revolution. As for the rest of the world, bin Laden's goals seemed to be motivated mainly by revenge. In 1998, he had decreed that it was the "duty of every Muslim" to kill Americans and their allies. The spectacular violence that characterized Al Qaeda's attacks was not a means to a goal—it was the goal. Success was measured by the body count, not by political change.



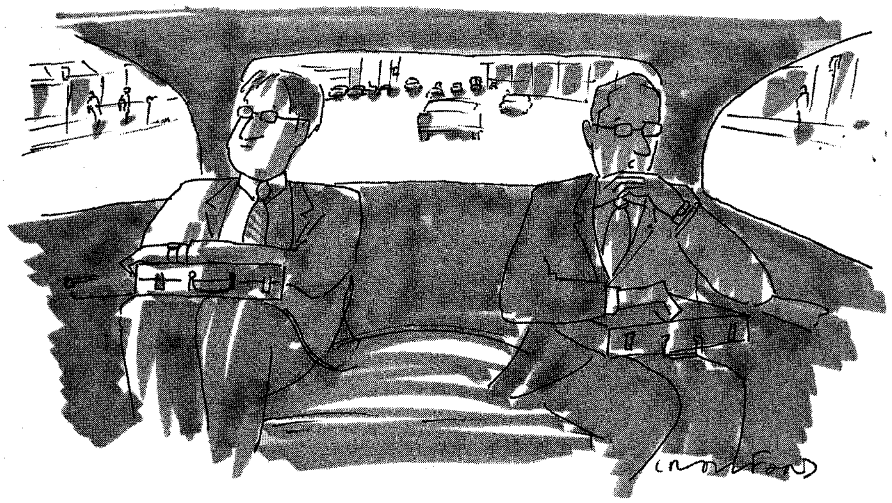
The Internet document suggested that a new intelligence was at work, a rationality not seen in Al Qaeda documents before. The Mujahideen Services Center, whatever that was, appeared to operate as a kind of Islamist think tank. "The person who put together those chapters had a clear strategic vision, realistic and well thought out," Amirah says. He told Hegghammer, "This is political science applied to jihad."

Although the document was posted on the Internet in December, 2003, the authors note that a draft had been written in September. In October, assassins shot a Spanish military attaché in Iraq, José Antonio Bernal Gómez, near his residence; in November, seven Spanish intelligence agents were ambushed and murdered south of Baghdad. Photographs of the killers standing on the agents' bodies circulated on Islamist Web sites. Another Internet document soon appeared, titled "Message to the Spanish People," signed by the Information Commission for the Help of the Iraqi People (Department of Foreign Propaganda), which threatened more attacks. "Return to your country and live peacefully," it demands, or else "the battalions of the Iraqi resistance and its supporters outside of Iraq are able to increase the dosage and will eclipse your memory of the rotten spies."

Variations in the Arabic transcriptions of English words in the "Jihadi Iraq" document suggested to Amirah that writers of various nationalities had drafted it. For instance, in some cases the "T" in Tony Blair's name was transcribed with the Arabic "ta," but in the section about Spain the author used the "dha," which is more typical of the Moroccan dialect. Also characteristic of Morocco is the use of Arabic numerals (the style used in the West) in place of the numbering system that is common from Egypt to the Persian Gulf. Those clues, plus certain particularly Moroccan political concerns expressed in the document, such as the independence movement in Western Sahara, suggested that at least some of the authors were diaspora Moroccans, probably living in Spain.

The link between the Internet document and the bombings soon became clearer. There is a reference early in the document to Abu Dujana, a companion of the Prophet who was known for his ferocity in battle. His name had been invoked by other jihadis, notably in the suicide bombings at the J. W. Marriott hotel in Jakarta in August, 2003. On Saturday evening, a television station in Madrid received a call from a man speaking Spanish with a Moroccan accent, who said that a videotape had been placed in a trash bin near the city's main mosque. "We declare our responsibility for what has occurred in Madrid, exactly two and a half years after the attacks on New York and Washington," a masked speaker on the videotape said. He identified himself as Abu Dujan al-Afghani, "the military spokesman for Al Qaeda in Europe." He continued, "It is a response to your collaboration with the criminal Bush and his allies. You love life and we love death, which gives an example of what the Prophet Muhammad said. If you don't stop your injustices, more and more blood will flow."

Until this tape appeared, even those investigators who were arguing that the train bombings were perpetrated by Islamic terrorists, not ETA, had been troubled by the fact that there were no "martyrs" in the attacks. It is a trademark of Al Qaeda to sacrifice its killers; this practice has provided a scanty moral cover for what would otherwise be seen simply as mass murder. But,



"We're going before the Supreme Court in an hour, Ben. Would it kill you to sit on my lap?"

when the investigators saw that the man calling himself Abu Dujan al-Afghani was dressed in white funeral robes, they realized that suicide was on the horizon.

The Al Qaeda cell in Spain is old and well established. Mohamed Atta, the commander of the September 11th attacks, came to Spain twice in 2001. The second time was in July, for a meeting in the coastal resort of Salou, which appears to have been arranged as a final go-ahead for the attacks. After September 11th, Spanish police estimated that there were three hundred Islamic radicals in the country who might be affiliated with Al Qaeda. Even before then, members of the Spanish cell had been monitored by police agencies, as is evident from the abundant use of wiretaps and surveillance information in indictments that were issued in November, 2001, when eleven suspects were charged with being Al Qaeda members—the first of several terrorist roundups. And yet, according to Spanish police officials, at the time of the Madrid attacks there was not a single Arabic-speaking intelligence agent in the country. Al Qaeda was simply not seen as a threat to Spain. "We never believed we were a real target," a senior police official said. "That's the reality."

At four o'clock on Saturday afternoon, sixty hours after the attacks and the day before the elections, Interior Minister Acebes announced the arrest of Jamal Zougam and two other Moroccans. Still, he continued to point at ETA. But by now the Socialists were publicly accusing the government of lying about the investigation in order to stay in power.

Polls opened the next morning at nine. Thirty-five million people voted, more than seventy-seven per cent of the electorate, eight per cent more than expected. Many were young, first-time voters, and their votes put the Socialists over the top. As José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero declared victory, he again condemned the war in Iraq and reiterated his intention to withdraw troops.

Four days later, the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades, a group claiming affiliation with Al Qaeda, sent a bombastic message to the London newspaper *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, avowing responsibility for the train bombings. "Whose turn will it be next?" the authors taunt. "Is it Japan, America, Italy, Britain, Saudi Arabia, or Australia?" The message also addressed the speculation that the terrorists would try to replicate their political success in Spain by disrupting the November U.S. elections. "We are very keen that Bush does not lose the upcoming elections," the authors write. Bush's "idiocy and religious fanaticism" are useful, the authors contend, for they stir the Islamic world to action.

On April 2nd, two weeks after the election, a security guard for the AVE, Spain's high-speed train line, discovered a blue plastic bag beside the tracks forty miles south of Madrid. Inside the bag were twenty-six pounds of Goma-2. Four hundred and fifty feet of cable had been draped across the security fence and attached, incorrectly, to the detonator. Had the bomb gone off when the AVE passed by—at a hundred and eighty m.p.h., carrying twelve hundred passengers—the results could have been far more catastrophic than those of March 11th. Spanish citizens asked themselves: If the bombings of March 11th had accomplished the goals set by Al Qaeda, what was the point of April 2nd?

Gustavo de Aristegui is one of the leaders of the Popular Party in Spain's Basque country. For years, he represented Donostio-San Sebastián, the region's capital, in the Spanish congress. A lawyer and former diplomat, Aristegui has been preoccupied for many years with the rise of Islamic terror. His father was Spain's Ambassador to Lebanon and was killed in Beirut in 1989, when Syrian forces shelled his diplomatic residence.

"Al Qaeda has four different networks," Aristegui told me in Madrid, the day after the Socialists took power. "First, there is the original network, the one that committed 9/11, which uses its own resources and people it has recruited and trained. Then, there is the ad-hoc terrorist network, consisting of franchise organizations that Al Qaeda created—often to replace ones that weren't bloody enough—in countries such as the Philippines, Jordan, and Algeria." The third network, Aristegui said, is more subtle, "a strategic union of like-minded companies." Since February, 1998, when Osama bin Laden announced the creation of the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Crusaders and Jews—an umbrella organization for Islamist groups from Morocco to China—Al Qaeda has expanded its dominion by making alliances and offering funds. "Hamas is in, or almost in," Aristegui said. "Bin Laden is trying to tempt Hezbollah to join, but they are Shia, and many Sunnis are opposed to them." Finally, there is the fourth network—"imitators, emulators," who are ideologically aligned with Al Qaeda but are less tied to it financially. "These are the ones who committed Madrid," Aristegui said.

Until the Madrid attacks, the Al Qaeda operations—in Dhahran, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Aden, New York, Washington, Jerba, Karachi, Bali, Mombasa, Riyadh, Casablanca, Jakarta, and Istanbul—had been political failures. These massacres committed in the name of jihad had achieved little except anger, grief, and the deaths of thousands. Soon after September 11th, Al Qaeda lost its base in Afghanistan and, along with that, its singular role in the coördination of international terror. New groups, such as the bombers in Madrid, were acting in the name of Al Qaeda, and although they may well have had the blessings of its leaders, they did not have the training, resources, or international contacts that had bolstered the previous generation of terrorists. Some operations, such as the 2003 attack on Western compounds in Riyadh, which killed mainly Muslims, were such fiascos that it appeared that Al Qaeda was no longer able to exercise control.

"Al Qaeda is not a hierarchical organization, and never was," Marc Sageman, a psychiatrist, a former C.I.A. case officer, and the author of "Understanding Terror Networks," told me. "It was always a social movement." The latest converts to the cause didn't train in Afghanistan, and they approach jihad differently. "These local guys are reckless and less well trained, but they are willing to kill themselves, whereas the previous leaders were not," Sageman said. Moreover, as the Spanish attacks showed, the new generation was more interested in committing violence for the sake of immediate political gain.

The kind of short-term tactical thinking displayed in the "Jihadi Iraq" document and the March 11th bombings is decidedly out of step with Al Qaeda's traditional world view, in which history is seen as an endless struggle between believers and infidels. It is the mind-set of fundamentalists of all religions. This war is eternal, and is never finally won until the longed-for Day of Judgment. In this contest, the first goal is to provoke conflict. Bold, violent deeds draw the lines and arouse ancient resentments, and are useful even if they have unsought consequences. Polarization is to be encouraged, radical simplicity being essential for religious warfare. An Al Qaeda statement posted on the Internet after the March 11th bombings declared, "Being targeted by an enemy is what will wake us from our slumber." Seen in this light, terrorism plays a sacramental role, dramatizing a religious conflict by giving it an apocalyptic backdrop. And Madrid was just another step in the relentless march of radical Islam against the modern, secular world.

Had the Madrid cell rested on its accomplishment after March 11th, Al Qaeda would properly be seen as an organization now being guided by political strategists—as an entity closer in spirit to ETA, with clear tactical objectives. April 2nd throws doubt on that perspective. There was little to be gained politically from striking an opponent who was complying with the stated demand: the government had agreed to withdraw troops from Iraq. If the point was merely humiliation or revenge, then April 2nd makes more sense; the terrorists wanted more blood, even if a second attack backfired politically. (The Socialists could hardly continue to follow the terrorist agenda with a thousand new corpses along the tracks.) April 2nd is comprehensible only if the real goal of the bombers was not Iraq but Spain, where the Islamic empire began its retreat five hundred years ago. "Spain is a target because we are the historic turning point," Aristegui said. "After this, they are going to try to hit Rome, London, Paris, and the U.S. harder than they did before."

Juan Áviles, a history professor at Madrid's Autonomous University and an adviser to the Civil Guard, told me, "From our Western point of view, it doesn't make sense that the killings of Atocha are meaningless. In Spain, we expect ETA to behave in certain ways. With Al Qaeda, the real dimensions of the threat are not known. And that produces uneasiness."

In the weeks after the March 11th attacks, Spanish police combed the immigrant neighborhoods outside Madrid, carrying photographs of suspects. "We didn't have them perfectly located, but we knew they were in Leganés," a police official told me. Leganés is a bland suburb of five-story red brick apartment complexes. The wide streets are lined with evenly spaced, adolescent oaks. In the mornings, the sidewalks are full of commuters rushing for the trains; then the place is vacant, except for grandmothers and strollers. In the evenings, the commuters return and close their doors.

At three o'clock on the afternoon of April 3rd, the day after the discovery of the bomb on the AVE tracks, police approached an apartment building on Calle Carmen Martín Gaite. They saw a young Moroccan man with a baseball cap on backward who was taking out trash. He yelled something in Arabic, then ran

"Five hamburgers with buns, three hamburgers without buns, and two buns without hamburgers."

away at an impressive pace. (He turned out to be a track champion; the police did not catch him, and he remains at large.) A moment later, voices cried out, "*Allahu Akhbar!*," and machine-gun fire from the second floor of the apartment house raked the street, scattering the cops. Over the next few hours, the police tactical unit, Grupo Especial de Operaciones, evacuated the residents of nearby apartments. Tanks and helicopters moved in, and the siege of Leganés began.

Inside the apartment were seven young men. Most of them were Moroccan immigrants who had come to Europe seeking economic opportunity. They had gone through a period of becoming "Westernized"—that is to say, they had been drinkers, drug dealers, womanizers. They hung out in cybercafés. They folded into the ethnic mix of urban Madrid. But they also lived in the European underground of Islamic radicalism, whose members were recruited more often in prison than in the training camps of Afghanistan.

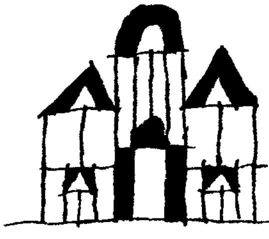
Their leader was Sarhane Ben Abdelmajid Fakhet, who was thirty-five years old and had a round, fleshy face and a patchy beard. He was a real-estate agent who had come to Madrid eight years earlier on a scholarship to study economics. His boss told the Spanish press that Fakhet was "a wonderful salesman," who held the record for the number of apartments sold in a month. Yet he did not talk to his co-workers or make friends with other Spaniards; he remained sequestered in his Muslim world.

"He was very soft and well educated," Moneir Mahmoud Aly el-Messery, the imam at the principal mosque in Madrid, told me. The mosque—a massive marble structure, built with Saudi money—is the center of Muslim cultural life in the Spanish capital. It overlooks the M-30, one of the main freeways feeding into Madrid. When Fakhet was a student, he worked in the restaurant that is attached to the mosque, and he sometimes came to Messery's weekly religion class. In the beginning, the imam noticed that Fakhet spoke familiarly to women as well as to men. "Then, for three or four years, I sensed that he had some extremist thoughts," Messery recalled. After class, Fakhet would ask telling questions, such as whether the imam believed that the leaders of the Arab countries were true believers, or if Islam authorized the use of force to spread the religion. Last year, he married a sixteen-year-old Moroccan girl who veiled her face and dressed entirely in black, including gloves. His performance at work declined, and he eventually stopped showing up altogether. According to police, he attended meetings with a small group of fellow-Muslims at a barbershop in Madrid, where the men would drink holy water from Mecca. Police believe that this ritual was aimed at absolving the men of the sin of suicide, which is condemned by Islam.

Soon after the attacks of September 11th, the imam had a dream about Fakhet. "Sarhane was in his kitchen, cooking on the stove," he recalled. "I saw what he was cooking was a big pot of worms. He tried to give me a plate of the food to eat. I said no. I said, 'Please clean the kitchen!' " Days later, the imam confronted Fakhet. "This is a message from God!" the imam said to him. "The kitchen is the thought, and the thought is dirty." Fakhet didn't respond. "He's a very cold person," the imam told me.

Fakhet was not the only young man in the M-30 mosque who had taken a turn toward extremism. Amer Azizi, a thirty-six-year-old Moroccan who was a veteran of jihad in Bosnia and Afghanistan, had been indicted in Spain for helping to plan the September 11th attacks. (He was accused of setting up the July, 2001, meeting between Atta and other conspirators in Salou.) Among people who frequented the mosque, Azizi had the reputation of being a drug addict, although he attended some classes on Islam along with Fakhet. In June, 2000, when the Arab countries' ambassadors to Spain came to the mosque to mourn the death of the Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad, Azizi insulted them, yelling, "Why do you come to pray for an infidel?" Police charge him with being a senior member of Al Qaeda and the leader of the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group, which was responsible for five bombings in Casablanca in May, 2003. He fled Spain just before his indictment.

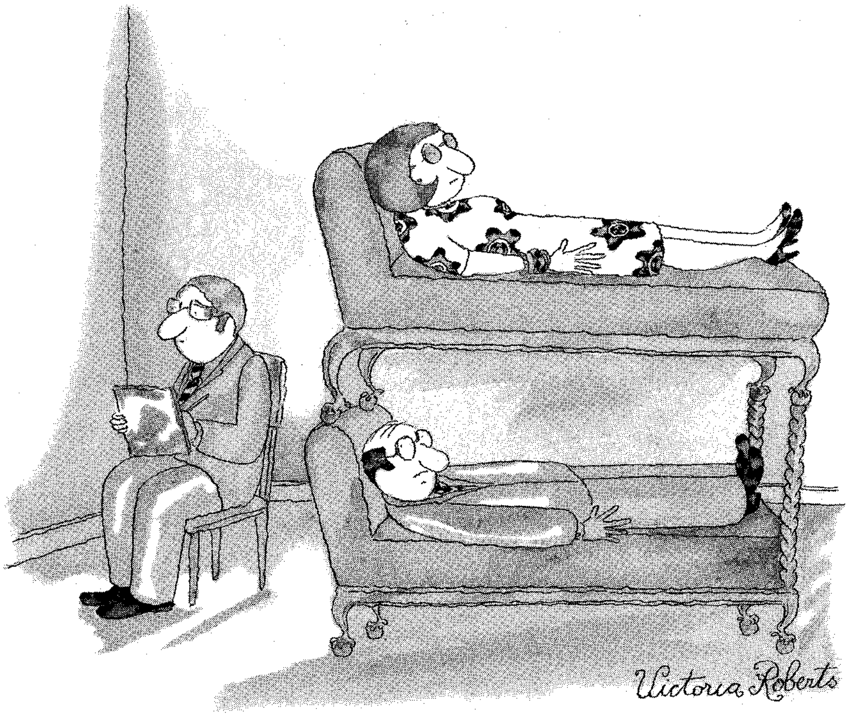
Another of Fakhet's friends was Jamal Ahmidan, a drug dealer who police say financed the March 11th bombings with seventy pounds of hashish. Messery blamed an Islamist cleric in London, Abu Qatada, a radical Palestinian from Jordan who emigrated to Britain as a refugee in 1994. After September 11th, police in Hamburg found eighteen tapes of Abu Qatada's sermons in Mohamed Atta's apartment there. British authorities arrested him in October, 2002, but he still wields great authority among Islamists around the world. The imam told me, "It was as if there were black hands behind a curtain pushing these young men."



At six o'clock in the evening on April 3rd, three hours after the start of the Leganés siege, a handwritten fax in Arabic, signed by Abu Dujan al-Afghani, arrived at *ABC*, a conservative daily in Madrid. Referring to the bomb found beside the AVE tracks the day before, the author argues that it failed to explode because "our objective was only to warn you and show you that we have the power and capacity, with the permission of Allah, to attack you when and how we want." The letter demanded that Spain withdraw its troops from both Iraq and Afghanistan by the following Sunday. Otherwise, "we will turn Spain into an inferno and make your blood flow like rivers." On the surface, the fax represented another turn toward tactical political thinking; more likely, it was an attempt to salvage a bungled operation.

Outside the Leganés apartment, the police attempted to negotiate, but the cornered terrorists cried out, "We will die killing!" Phone calls that they made to relatives during the siege confirmed their intentions. They also attempted to call Abu Qatada in London's Belmarsh Prison, apparently seeking a fatwa that would morally sanction their suicide.

Instead of turning off the electricity and waiting them out, the police decided to storm the apartment. They ordered the terrorists to come out "naked and with your hands up." One of the occupants responded, "Come in and we'll talk." At 9:05 P.M., the police blew the lock on the door and fired tear gas into the room. Almost immediately, an explosion shattered the apartment, killing the terrorists and a police officer. The blast was so intense that it took days before the authorities could determine how many people had been in the apartment. The body of Jamal Ahmidan was hurled through the walls and into a swimming pool. One of the seven bodies still has not been identified.



"She said, 'I'll go if you go,' and I said, 'I'll go if you go,' and here we are."

In the ruins, police found twenty-two pounds of Goma-2 and two hundred copper detonators that were similar to those used in the train bombings. They also found the shredded remains of a videotape. These fragments were painstakingly reassembled, to the point where police could view the final statement of Fakhet and two other members of the cell, which called itself "the brigade situated in Al Andalus." Unless Spanish troops left Iraq within a week, the men had declared, "we will continue our jihad until martyrdom in the land of Tariq ibn Ziyad."

Al Andalus is the Arabic name for the portion of Spain that fell to Muslim armies after the invasion by the Berber general Tariq ibn Ziyad in 711. It includes not only the southern region of Andalusia, but most of the Iberian Peninsula. For the next eight hundred years, Al Andalus remained in Islamic hands. "You know of the Spanish crusade against Muslims, and that not much time has passed since the expulsion from Al Andalus and the tribunals of the Inquisition," Fakhet says on the tape. He is referring to 1492, when Ferdinand and Isabella completed the reconquest of Spain, forcing Jews and Muslims to convert to Catholicism or leave the Iberian Peninsula. "Blood for blood!" he shouts. "Destruction for destruction!"

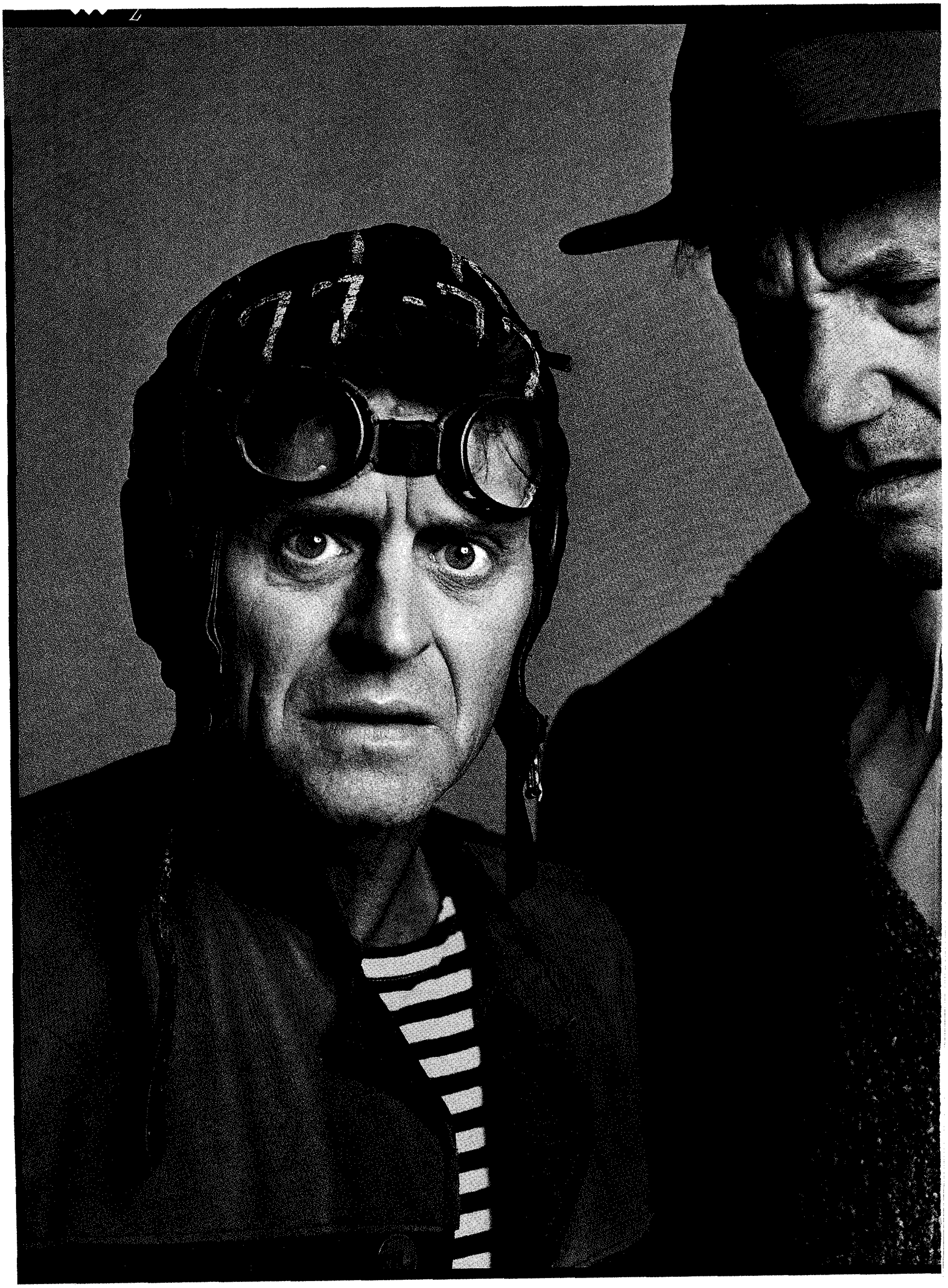
Were these the true goals of Al Qaeda? Were the besieged terrorists in Leganés simply struggling to get Spain out of Iraq, or were they also battling to regain the lost colonies of Islam? In other words, were these terrorists who might respond to negotiation or appeasement, or were they soldiers in a religious fight to the finish that had merely been paused for five hundred years?

Less than a month after 9/11, Osama bin Laden and his chief lieutenant, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, had appeared on Al Jazeera. "We will not accept that the tragedy of Al Andalus will be repeated in Palestine," Zawahiri said, drawing an analogy between the expulsion of the Moors from Iberia and the present-day plight of the Palestinians. The use of the archaic name Al Andalus left most Spaniards nonplussed. "We took it as a folkloric thing," Ramón Pérez-Maura, an editor at *ABC*, told me. "We probably actually laughed." This January, bin Laden issued a "Message to the Muslim People," which was broadcast on Al Jazeera. He lamented the decline of the Islamic world: "It is enough to know that the economy of all Arab countries is weaker than the economy of one country that had once been part of our world when we used to truly adhere to Islam. That country is the lost Al Andalus."

The Muslims who were expelled from Al Andalus took refuge mainly in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Some families, it is said, still have the keys to their houses in Córdoba and Seville. But the legacy of Al Andalus persisted in Spain as well. Up until the Victorian era, the country was considered to be more a part of the Orient than of Europe. The language, the food, and the architecture were all deeply influenced by the Islamic experience—a rival past that Catholic Spain, in all its splendor, could never bury. "In modern Arabic literature, Al Andalus is seen as the lost paradise," Manuela Marín, a professor at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, in Madrid, told me. "For Spain, the history of Al Andalus has a totally different meaning. After all, what we know as Spain was made in opposition to the Islamic presence on the peninsula. Only recently have people begun to accept that Islam was a part of Spain."

Although many Spanish historians have painted Moorish Spain as something other than paradise for Jews and Christians, for Muslims it remains not only a symbol of vanished greatness but a kind of alternative vision of Islam—one in which all the ills of present-day Islamic societies are reversed. Muslim tourists, including many heads of state, come to Spain to imagine a time when Islam was at the center of art and learning, not on the fringes. "The Alhambra is the No. 1 Islamic monument," Malik A. Ruíz Callejas, the emir of the Islamic community in Spain and the president of Granada's new mosque, told me recently. "Back when in Paris and London people were being eaten alive by rats, in Córdoba everyone could read and write. The civilization of Al Andalus was probably the most just, most unified, and most tolerant in history, providing the greatest level of security and the highest standard of living."

Imams sometimes invoke the glory of Al Andalus in Friday prayers as a reminder of the price that Muslims paid for turning away from the true faith. When I asked Moneir el-Messery, of the M-30 mosque, if the Madrid bombers could have been motivated by the desire to recapture Al Andalus, he looked up sharply and said, "I can speak of the feeling of all Muslims. It



PORTRAIT BY
RICHARD AVEDON

RUSSIAN RUSH

"Forbidden Christmas, or the Doctor and the Patient," a new play by Rezo Gabriadze, has a simple, even naïve, story, set in the Stalinist Georgia of Gabriadze's childhood. A man named Chito (Mikhail Baryshnikov) is abandoned by his fiancée in favor of a dashing fellow with a fancy car. Chito thereupon decides that he is a car. Seven years later, on Christmas Eve of 1952, he pulls up at the house of the town doctor (Jon DeVries), another maniac. A little girl is dying, Chito says; the doctor must come. The rest of the play concerns the two men's misadventures as they stagger through a blizzard to the girl's house. There is a surprise ending and a lesson in faith—a resource hard to come by in the U.S.S.R. in 1952. It's all presided over by an angel in red spats (the former Joffrey Ballet dancer Luis Perez). Think Capra.

This is more than a play, however. Gabriadze is a painter, screenwriter, film director, and puppeteer as well as a playwright, and in "Forbidden Christmas" he uses every tool in his bag. Painted panels scoot across the stage on wires. Georgian music plays. Stories unroll on scrolls, like little movies. But the glory of the piece is its movement-drama, notably Baryshnikov's car act. He revs, he chugs, he speeds, he lays rubber, all without benefit of anything but his body. The role clearly needed a dancer. That it got Baryshnikov might seem a stroke of luck, but it wasn't. Baryshnikov saw Gabriadze's puppet plays and decided that he had to work with him. "Forbidden Christmas" was written at his request, and co-produced by the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation. The show, which was part of the Lincoln Center Festival, will tour through December.

—*Joan Acocella*

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was a part of history. We were here for eight centuries. You can't forget it, ever."

The fear that the "Moors" would one day return and reclaim their lost paradise—through either conquest or immigration—has created a certain paranoia in Spanish politics. Construction of the mosque in Granada was delayed for twenty-two years because of the intense anxiety surrounding the growing Islamic presence. In 1986, Spain joined the European Union; generous E.U. subsidies ignited an economic boom, drawing thousands of young men from North Africa. "The Muslims are young, and male, and they come by themselves," Mohammed el-Afifi, the director of press relations at the M-30 mosque, told me two years ago, when I visited him. "They don't speak Spanish, and they don't have much information about Spain. And they arrive with a different religion." At the time, Afifi placed the number of Arab immigrants in Spain at three hundred thousand. Now the number of Arabic-speaking immigrants is five hundred thousand, not including half a million illegals. The Spanish government has encouraged official immigration from South America at the expense of North Africa, but smugglers in high-speed power boats make nightly drop-offs on the ragged Spanish coastline, and the frequent discovery of corpses washing up on the beaches testifies to the desperation of those who did not quite get to shore.

Muslim immigration is transforming all of Europe. Nearly twenty million people in the European Union identify themselves as Muslim. This population is disproportionately young, male, and unemployed. The societies these men have left are typically poor, religious, conservative, and dictatorial; the ones they enter are rich, secular, liberal, and free. For many, the exchange is invigorating, but for others Europe becomes a prison of alienation. A Muslim's experience of immigration can be explained in part by how he views his adopted homeland. Islamic thought broadly divides civilization into *dar al-Islam*, the land of the believers, and *dar al-Kufr*, the land of impiety. France, for instance, is a secular country, largely Catholic, but it is now home to five million Muslims. Should it therefore be considered part of the Islamic world? This question is central to the debate about whether Muslims in Europe can integrate into their new communities or must stand apart from them. If France can be considered part of *dar al-Islam*, then Muslims can form alliances and participate in politics, they should have the right to institute Islamic law, and they can send their children to French schools. If it is a part of *dar al-Kufr*, then strict Muslims must not only keep their distance; they must fight against their adopted country.

The Internet provides confused young Muslims in Europe with a virtual community. Those who cannot adapt to their new homes discover on the Internet a responsive and compassionate forum. "The Internet stands in for the idea of the *ummah*, the mythologized Muslim community," Marc Sageman, the psychiatrist and former C.I.A. officer, said. "The Internet makes this ideal community concrete, because one can interact with it." He compares this virtual *ummah* to romantic conceptions of nationhood, which inspire people not only to love their country but to die for it.

"The Internet is the key issue," Gilles Kepel, a prominent Arabist and a professor at the Institut d'Études Politiques, in Paris, told me recently. "It erases the frontiers between the *dar al-Islam* and the *dar al-Kufr*. It allows the propagation of a universal norm, with an Internet Sharia and fatwa system." Kepel was speaking of the Islamic legal code, which is administered by the clergy. Now one doesn't have to be in Saudi Arabia or Egypt to live under the rule of Islamic law. "Anyone can seek a ruling from his favorite sheikh in Mecca," Kepel said. "In the old days, one sought a fatwa from the sheikh who had the best knowledge. Now it is sought from the one with the best Web site."

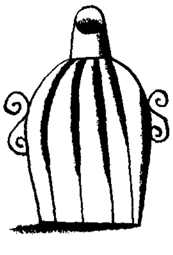
To a large extent, Kepel argues, the Internet has replaced the Arabic satellite channels as a conduit of information and communication. "One can say that this war against the West started on television," he said, "but, for instance, with the decapitation of the poor hostages in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, those images were propagated via Webcams and the Internet. A jihadi subculture has been created that didn't exist before 9/11."

Because the Internet is anonymous, Islamist dissidents are less susceptible to government pressure. "There is no signature," Kepel said. "To some of us who have been trained as classicists, the cyber-world appears very much like the time before Gutenberg. Copyists used to add their own notes into a text, so you never know who was the real author.”

Gabriel Weimann, a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, has been monitoring terrorist Web sites for seven years. “When we started, there were only twelve sites,” he told me. “Now there are more than four thousand.” Every known terrorist group maintains more than one Web site, and often the sites are in different languages. “You can download music, videos, donate money, receive training,” Weimann said. “It’s a virtual training camp.” There are two online magazines associated with Al Qaeda, *Sawt al-Jihad* (Voice of Jihad) and *Muaskar al-Battar* (Camp al-Battar), which feature how-to articles on kidnapping, poisoning, and murdering hostages. Specific targets, such as the Centers for Disease Control, in Atlanta, or FedWire, the money-clearing system operated by the Federal Reserve Board, are openly discussed. “We do see a rising focus on the U.S.,” Weimann told me. “But some of this talk may be fake—a scare campaign.”

One of the sites has been linked directly to terrorist acts. An editor of *Sawt al-Jihad*, Issa bin Saad al-Oshan, died in a gun battle with Saudi police on July 21st, during a raid on a villa in Riyadh, where the head of Paul M. Johnson, Jr., the American hostage, was discovered in the freezer.

The importance of the Internet in the case of Madrid is disputed among experts. “Yes, the Internet has created a virtual *ummah*,” Olivier Roy, an expert on political Islam at the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, wrote to me recently. “The Web sites seem to attract the lonely Muslim cybernaut, who does remain in a virtual world. But Madrid’s bombers used the Internet as a tool of communication. Their leaders had personal links with other Al Qaeda members, not virtual ones.”



Thomas Hegghammer, the Norwegian investigator, divides the jihadi Internet community into three categories. “First, you have the message boards,” he explained in a recent e-mail. “There you find the political and religious discussions among the sympathizers and potential recruits. The most important message boards for Al Qaeda sympathizers are Al Qal’ah (The Fortress), Al Sahat (The Fields), and Al Islah (Reform).” These boards, Hegghammer wrote, provide links to the “information hubs,” where new radical-Islamist texts, declarations, and recordings are posted. “You often find these among the ‘communities’ at Yahoo, Lycos, and so on,” Hegghammer continued. “There are many such sites, but the main one is Global Islamic Media.” It was at this site that Hegghammer discovered the “Jihadi Iraq” document. “Finally, you have the ‘mother sites,’ which are run by people who get their material directly from the ideologues or operatives. They must not be confused with the myriad amateur sites (usually in English) set up by random sympathizers or bored kids.”

Hegghammer pointed to several key sites associated with Al Qaeda, including Al Faruq (He Who Distinguishes Truth from Falsehood) and Markaz al-Dirasat wal-Buhuth al-Islamiyyah (Center for Islamic Study and Research). “Al Faruq is difficult to place geographically and organizationally, but it seems closer to the Afghanistan-based elements of Al Qaeda,” Hegghammer wrote. Markaz al-Dirasat concentrates on Saudi Arabia. These sites move continuously, Hegghammer wrote, sometimes several times a day, to avoid being hacked by intelligence agencies or freelance Internet vigilantes. One of Al Qaeda’s first sites, Al Neda, was operating until July, 2002, when it was captured by an American who operates pornography sites. The Internet jihadis now cover themselves by stealing unguarded server space. Jihad videos have recently been discovered on servers belonging to George Washington University and the Arkansas Department of Highways and Transportation.

Last March, in Pakistan, Jamal Ismail, a reporter for Abu Dhabi TV, showed me how he monitors the Al Faruq site. Each day, he receives an e-mail with a link, which leads him to the new address. Like several other jihadi sites, the Al Faruq site announces itself with a white stallion racing across the screen, which is the Al Qaeda logo. “Every few days, it announces a new name, but it is the same Web site with a new look,” he told me. “It concentrates on Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan.” In mid-July, I asked Ismail via e-mail if there was any discussion of the upcoming American Presidential election; the Department of Homeland Security had just announced contingency plans to postpone the election in the event that Al Qaeda attempts to disrupt it. “There is no new article like the Spanish one, but we are all expecting people to talk about it,” Ismail said. Sageman said that he had seen “vague statements along the lines of ‘We’ll do to the U.S. the same as we did to Spain,’ ” but nothing specific or authoritative.

I went to Yahoo Groups and typed in “jihad.” There were a hundred and ninety-two chat groups registered under that category. With my Arabic-speaking assistant, Nidal Daraiseh, I checked out qal3ah.net, which had 7,939 members. On March 12th, the day after the train bombings, a message titled “The Goals of Al Qaeda in Attacking Madrid” had been posted by a writer calling himself Gallant Warrior. Echoing a theme that is frequently repeated on these sites, the writer noted that by carrying out its threat to Spain, Al Qaeda proved that its words were matched by actions: “Al Qaeda has sent a message to the crusading people: do not think that death and fear are only for the weak Muslims. . . . Aznar, the American tail, has lost. And great fear has spread among the people of the countries in alliance with America. They will all be vanquished. Thank God for letting us live this long to see the jihad battalions in Europe. If anyone had predicted this three years ago, one would have said he was dreaming.”

Another site I visited, ikhwan.net, was unusual in having a number of female correspondents. A writer named Murad chastised those who condemned the Madrid bombings. “You pity the deaths of those non-Muslims so quickly! If Muslims had died in their lands in the manner the writer discusses, would he have cried for them?” A woman named Bint al-Dawa responded, “Brother Murad, Islam does not allow the killing of innocent people.” A man who called himself “Salahuddeen2” entered the discussion: “We have said that we are against the killing of civilians anywhere, but the enemies of God kill Muslim civilians every day and do not feel shame. They should drink from the same bitter cup.”

Though these sites have become an ideological home for many Muslims, for most Arab immigrants Europe has provided comfort and support, while at the same time allowing them the freedom to maintain their Islamic identities. Three Moroccan immigrants died on the trains on March 11th. One was a devout thirteen-year-old girl, Sanae Ben Salah, for whom the M-30 mosque was said to have been her "second home." Another, Mohamed Itabien, twenty-seven, was an illegal immigrant who taught Arabic classes at a mosque in Guadalajara. He was the sole source of support for his family, including eleven siblings, most of whom lived in a tiny town in Morocco where there were no telephones. The third, Osama el-Amrati, was a builder who was engaged to a Spanish woman. "Europe has given us opportunities our own countries didn't give us," Mustapha el-M'Rabet, the head of the Moroccan Workers and Immigrants Association, told me in Madrid. "Our children are in school, and we are working. Thousands of families in Morocco can live with the money we get here." When I asked M'Rabet if Al Andalus was part of the lure for Moroccan immigrants, he said, "Nobody with common sense could talk about going back to that. It's madness. It's a disease."

Under Aznar, relations with Morocco deteriorated to the point where, in 2002, the countries broke off diplomatic relations over various problems, including territory disputes, immigration, and the flow of drugs into Europe through Spain (according to the United Nations, Morocco exports twelve billion dollars' worth of marijuana each year). Eventually, the governments returned their ambassadors, without resolving the disputes that had led to the rupture. When twelve suicide bombers struck in Casablanca in May, 2003, killing forty-five people, one of their targets was a restaurant called Casa de España.

"Spain is the bridge between the Islamic world and the West," Haizam Amirah Fernández said, when we met in a conference room at Madrid's Real Instituto Elcano shortly after the train bombings. "Think of that other bridge to the east, Turkey. Both have been hit by jihadist terrorists—in the same week." In Istanbul, on March 9th, two suicide bombers attacked a Jewish club, killing one person and injuring five others. "The whole idea is to cut off these bridges," Amirah said. "If the goal is to polarize people, Muslims and infidels, that is a way of doing it. Jihadists are the most fervent defenders of the notion of a clash of civilizations."

One evening, I went to a pub with some Spanish cops. "There is this legend that Spain and the Arab world were friends," a senior investigator said. He nodded toward the waitress and the customers at several nearby tables. "Here in the bar are five Arabs sitting next to you. Nobody used to think it was strange. Now people are reacting differently." He paused and said, "They want to smell the jasmine of Al Andalus and pray again in the Granada mosque. Can you imagine the mentality these S.O.B.s have?"

ROADWORK NEXT
400 YEARS.
DIFFEE

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On a splendid April day in Paris, I went to lunch with Gilles Kepel, the Arabist scholar, and Jean-Louis Bruguière, the doughty French counterterrorism judge. Despite the beautiful weather, the men were in a gloomy frame of mind. "I am seriously concerned about the future," Bruguière said, as we sat at a corner table under an arbor of lilacs that shed blossoms onto his jacket. His armor-plated Peugeot was parked on the street and his bodyguards were discreetly arrayed in the restaurant. "I began work on this in 1991, against the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria. These groups were well known and each had an understandable structure. The majority were sponsored by states—Syria, Libya, Iraq. Now we have to face a new and largely unknown organization, with a loose system and hidden connections, so it is not easy to understand its internal functioning. It appears to be composed of cells and networks that are scattered all over the world and changing shape constantly."

Bruguière pointed to the Istanbul bombings in November, 2003, and the March 11th bombings in Madrid as being the opening salvos in a new attack on Europe. "They have struck in the east and in the south," he said. "I think the next stop will be in the north."

"London or Paris," Kepel suggested.

"The principal target is London," Bruguière declared.

Chechnya is playing a larger and more disturbing role in the worldwide jihad, Bruguière said. At present, Al Qaeda and its affiliates operate on a rather low-tech level, but in Chechnya many recruits are being trained to exploit the technical advantages of developed countries. "Some of these groups have the capacity for hijacking satellites," he told me. Capturing signals beamed from space, terrorists could devastate the communications industry, shut down power grids, and paralyze the ability of developed countries to defend themselves.

"In 2001, all the Islamist actors in Madrid were identified," Bruguière said. His own investigations had led him to the Spanish capital that June. He quickly informed the Spanish police that Jamal Zougam, the owner of the phone shop, was a major contact for jihad recruits in Europe and Morocco. But Zougam was not apprehended. French and Spanish authorities have a long history of disagreement over the handling of terrorism, with the Spanish accusing the French of giving sanctuary to ETA terrorists. Bruguière said that when he arrived in Madrid he found that "the Islamic threat was underassessed." The Spanish police had made him wait a year before allowing him to interview Zougam. After Bruguière went back to Paris, the Spanish police put Zougam under surveillance and searched his apartment, finding jihadi tapes and videos. The authorities briefly renewed their interest in him after the 2003 Casablanca bombings, but once again there was insufficient evidence to arrest him.

I asked Bruguière if he thought that the Madrid attacks represented an evolution in Al Qaeda's operational ability, or suggested that the organization had lost control. He said that Al Qaeda was now little more than "a brand, a trademark," but he admitted that he had been surprised. "It was a good example of the capacity and the will of these groups to adopt a political agenda. The defeat of the late government and the agreement of the new government to withdraw troops—it was a terrorist success, the first time we have had such a result."

Later, Kepel and I discussed the reason that Europe was under attack. "The future of Islam is in Europe," he said. "It has a huge Muslim population. Either we train our Muslims to become modern global citizens, who live in a democratic, pluralistic society, or, on the contrary, the Islamists win, and take over those Muslim European constituencies. Then we're in serious trouble."

"I doubt whether anyone can seriously suggest that Spain has not acted in a way that suggests appeasement," Ramón Pérez-Maura, the editor at *ABC*, told me shortly after Zapatero had announced plans to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq in May, without waiting to see if U.N. peacekeeping troops would become involved. Pérez-Maura recalled a recent lunch he had had with the Iranian Ambassador to Spain, Mortez Alviri. According to Pérez-Maura, Alviri said that Miguel Ángel Moratinos—Zapatero's pick for Foreign Minister—had approached the Iranians to negotiate with Moqtada al-Sadr, the radical Shiite cleric, whose militia was engaged in savage urban warfare with Coalition troops. (Moratinos has denied this.) According to Pérez-Maura, Alviri passed Moratinos's message along, and, less than a day after Zapatero announced the withdrawal, Sadr said from Najaf that Spanish troops would be allowed to leave Iraq unmolested. That was a false promise. American and Spanish forces had to shoot a path through Sadr's militia in Najaf, which repeatedly attacked them.

"We're only here summers, but Roger likes to be taken for a local."

On April 15th, the voice of Osama bin Laden spoke again. "This is a message to our neighbors north of the Mediterranean, containing a reconciliation initiative as a response to their positive reactions," bin Laden said on the Arab satellite channel Al Arabiya. Now it was the Al Qaeda leader who cast himself in the role of a rational political actor. "It is in both sides' interest to curb the plans of those who shed the blood of peoples for their narrow personal interest and subservience to the White House gang." He proposed a European committee to study "the justice" of the Islamic causes, especially Palestine. "The reconciliation will start with the departure of its last soldier from our country," bin Laden said—not indicating if he was referring to Iraq, Afghanistan, or the entire Muslim world. "The door of reconciliation is open for three months from the date of announcing this statement. . . . For those who want reconciliation, we have given them a chance. Stop shedding our blood so as to preserve your blood. It is in your hands to apply this easy, yet difficult, formula. You know that the situation will expand and increase if you delay things. . . . Peace be upon those who follow guidance."

From bin Laden's perspective, he was offering to bring Europe into an unsettled middle ground called the *dar al-Suhl*. This is the land of the treaty, where Muslims live as a peaceful minority. European leaders rejected bin Laden's proposal almost immediately, seeing it as a ploy to aggravate the tensions in the Western alliance. "It's the weirdest thing in the world," a senior F.B.I. official told me. "It shows he's on the ropes, desperate."

Bin Laden's truce offer immediately became a topic of discussion on the Islamist Web sites. "This initiative should be considered a golden opportunity to the people of Europe," read a posting by Global Islamic Media on qal3ah.net. "Do not find it strange if after a while, a year or so, you will hear about secret negotiations by one country and representatives of Al Qaeda. . . . The organization has come to represent the Islamic *ummah* and speaks in its name. It appears that we are returning to the days of the caliphate."

On another site, islah.tv, a writer calling himself "Ya Rab Shahada" (Oh God, Martyrdom) picked up on the theme: "The Sheikh speaks these words as the Caliph of the Muslims and not as a wanted man. . . . This is the sign to begin the big strike on America." Another writer said, "Here we have the lands of Al Andalus where the trains were struck. The Sheikh is isolating America now . . . and it will be seen who will choose peace from those who chose suicide." A writer calling himself "@adlomari@" added, "The Sheikh has . . . proved to the world that Europe does not want peace with Muslims, and that it wants to be a partner in the Crusader crimes against Muslims. The coming days will show that events in Europe are coming if it does not respond to the Sheikh's initiative. Tomorrow is near."

The fact that bin Laden was addressing nations as an equal showed a new confidence in Al Qaeda's ability to manipulate the political future. Exploiting this power will depend, in part, on convincing the West that Al Qaeda and bin Laden remain in control of the worldwide Islamist jihad. As long as Al Qaeda is seen as being an irrational, unyielding death cult, the only response is to destroy it. But if Al Qaeda—amorphous as that entity has become—has evolved into something like a virtual Islamist state that is trying to find a permanent place for itself in the actual world, then the prospect of future negotiations is not out of the question, however unlikely or repellent that may sound to Americans. After all, the Spanish government has brokered truces with ETA, which has killed four times as many people in Spain as Al Qaeda has, and the accelerated withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq following the train bombings has already set a precedent for accommodation, which was quickly followed by the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Last year, Germany paid a six-million-dollar ransom to Algerian terrorists, and the Philippines recently pulled its fifty troops out of Iraq in order to save a hostage from being beheaded.

On July 21st, immediately after the Philippine hostage was freed, new warnings appeared on the Internet, from a body called the Tawhid Islamic Group, promising terror attacks against Poland and Bulgaria unless they withdrew their troops from Iraq. Although leaders of both countries immediately rejected the demands, opinion polls showed that popular sentiment was turning against the countries' presence in Iraq. Another threat, allegedly from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's group, Tawhid and Jihad, warned Japan that "queues of cars laden with explosives" were waiting, unless Japanese humanitarian troops left Iraq. Also in July, the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades posted a communiqué on the Internet ordering Italians to overthrow their Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi. "We are in Italy, and not one of you is safe so long as you refuse our Sheikh's offer," the message said. "Get rid of the incompetent Berlusconi or we will truly burn Italy." The Internet warriors have been emboldened, although it is impossible to know how seriously to take their threats.

Appeasement is a foolish strategy for dealing with Al Qaeda. Last year, many Saudis were stunned when the terrorist group struck Western compounds in Riyadh—shortly after the U.S. had announced that it would withdraw troops from Saudi Arabia, fulfilling one of bin Laden's primary demands. The Saudis now realize that Al Qaeda won't be assuaged until all foreigners are expelled from the Arabian Peninsula and a rigid theocracy has been imposed. Yet some of the countries on Al Qaeda's hit list will no doubt seek to appease terrorists as a quick solution to a crisis.

Intelligence officials are now trying to determine who is the next target, and are sifting through "chatter" in search of a genuine threat. "We see people getting on the Internet and then they get on their phones and talk about it," a senior F.B.I. official told me. "We are now responding to the threat to the U.S. elections." The idea of attacking before Election Day, the official said, "was born out of Madrid." Earlier this year, an international task force dubbed Operation Crevice arrested members of a bomb-making ring in London. During the investigation, officials overheard statements that there were jihadis in Mexico awaiting entry into the U.S. That coincided with vague warnings from European imams about attacks before the elections. As a result of this intelligence, surveillance of border traffic from Mexico has been increased.

Even though Al Qaeda has been weakened by the capture of key operatives, such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the architect of the 9/11 attacks, it is hardly defunct. "There is a replacement for Mohammed named Abu Faraj," the F.B.I. official said. "If there is an attack on the U.S., his deputy, Hamza Rabia, will be responsible. He's head of external operations for Al Qaeda—an arrogant, nasty guy." The official continued, "The most dangerous thing now is that no one is in control. These guys don't have to go back to bin Laden or Zawahiri for approval."

One of the most sobering pieces of information to come out of the investigation of the March 11th bombings is that the planning for the attacks may have begun nearly a year before 9/11. In October, 2000, several of the suspects met in Istanbul with Amer Azizi, who had taken the nom de guerre Othman Al Andalusi—Othman of Al Andalus. Azizi later gave the conspirators permission to act in the name of Al Qaeda, although it is unclear whether he authorized money or other assistance—or, indeed, whether Al Qaeda had much support to offer. In June, Italian police released a surveillance tape of one of the alleged planners of the train bombings, an Egyptian housepainter named Rabei Osman Sayed Ahmed, who said that the operation "took me two and a half years." Ahmed had served as an explosives expert in the Egyptian Army. It appears that some kind of attack would have happened even if Spain had not joined the Coalition—or if the invasion of Iraq had never occurred.

"The real problem of Spain for Al Qaeda is that we are a neighbor of Arab countries—Morocco and Algeria—and we are a model of economy, democracy, and secularism," Florentino Portero, a political analyst at the Grupo de Estudios Estratégicos, in Madrid, told me. "We support the transformation and Westernization of the Middle East. We defend the transition of Morocco from a monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. We are allies of the enemies of Al Qaeda in the Arab world. This point is not clearly understood by the Spanish people. We are a menace to Al Qaeda just because of who we are." ♦

ANNALS OF PHILANTHROPY

THE GIFT

Zell Kravinsky gave away millions. But somehow it wasn't enough.

BY IAN PARKER

Last summer, not long after Zell Kravinsky had given almost his entire forty-five-million-dollar real-estate fortune to charity, he called Barry Katz, an old friend in Connecticut, and asked for help with an alibi. Would Katz call Kravinsky's wife, Emily, in Philadelphia, and say that the two men were about to take a weeklong trip to Katz's ski condominium in Vermont? This untruth would help Kravinsky do something that did not have his wife's approval: he would be able to leave home, check into the Albert Einstein Medical Center, in Philadelphia, for a few days, and donate a kidney to a woman whose name he had only just learned.

Katz refused, and Kravinsky became agitated. He said that the intended recipient of his gift would die without the kidney, and that his wife's reluctance to support this "nondirected" donation—it would be only the hundred and thirty-fourth of its kind in the United States—would make her culpable in that death. "I can't allow her to take this person's life!" Kravinsky said. He was, at forty-eight, a former owner of shopping malls and distribution centers, and a man with a single thrift-store suit that had cost him twenty dollars.

"You think she'd be taking a life?" Katz asked.

"Absolutely," Kravinsky replied.

Katz then asked, warily, "Do you mean that anybody who is not donating a kidney is taking someone's life?"

"Yes," Kravinsky said.

"So, by your terms, I'm a murderer?"

"Yes," Kravinsky said, in as friendly a way as possible.

After a pause, Katz said, "I have to get off the phone—I can't talk about this anymore," and he hung up. A few weeks later, Kravinsky crept out of his house at six o'clock in the morning while his wife and children were still asleep. Emily Kravinsky learned that her husband had donated a kidney when she read about it in a local newspaper.

Kravinsky, whose unrestrained disbursement of his assets—first financial, then corporeal—has sometimes been unsettling for the people close to him, grew up in a row house in the working-class Philadelphia neighborhood of Oxford Circle, amid revolutionary rhetoric. "My father would say how great things were in the Soviet Union, and how shabby they were here," Kravinsky recalled recently. "He would rail against rich people and the ruling class."

Kravinsky's father, Irving, who is now eighty-nine, was born in Russia to a Jewish family, which immigrated to America when he was a boy. A tank commander in the Second World War, he was a socialist whose faith in the Soviet Union was extinguished only after that country no longer existed. He worked as a printer, Kravinsky told me, "thinking he'd be in the vanguard of the revolution by remaining in the proletariat"; and when Zell, who had two older sisters, began to excel in school his success seems to have been taken by his father as a sign of class disloyalty. After Zell graduated from elementary school with a prize as the best student, Irving told him, "Well, next year you'll be nothing."

James Kahn, a childhood friend of Kravinsky's, and a fellow-member of the chess team in high school, told me that Zell's father and mother—Reeda Kravinsky is a former teaching supervisor, now seventy-eight—"were steadfast in denying him any praise." He added, "I think what he did later was almost in desperation—doing the most extreme thing possible, something that they couldn't deny was a good thing." Reeda told me, "I think we did praise him, but maybe he didn't get enough attention, for an outstanding child."

As a boy, Kravinsky could hope to gain his parents' attention either by conforming or by rebelling; he did both. "Zell was simultaneously more left-wing and more right-wing than I was," Kahn said. He had an active social conscience—he read books on Gandhi, and, at the age of twelve, he picketed City Hall in support of public housing. (He remembers this as the last time he did anything that met with his father's approval.) But, by the standards of the late sixties, Kravinsky was unfashionably curious about money. He first invested in the stock market when he was twelve, and told me that he was "pretty young when I understood money better than my father did."

In Kravinsky's eyes, his father had humiliated himself in his relationships with money. Citing his radical politics, Irving Kravinsky said he couldn't apply for union work. "He was terrifically exploited," Kravinsky recalled. "He was afraid to ask for a raise. My mother yelled at him, day and night, said he wasn't a man, and 'Zell's more of a man than you are.'"

In 1971, Kravinsky won a scholarship to Dartmouth. He majored in Asian studies, wrote poetry, took up meditation, and grew his hair long. Soon after graduation, Kravinsky returned to Philadelphia, where he got a job at an insurance company. He began a relationship with a co-worker there, and moved in with her; the match lasted less than a year, but it had the side effect of introducing Kravinsky to real estate. He bought a duplex in the working-class neighborhood of Logan for ten thousand dollars, and rented out half of it. When the couple split up, Kravinsky kept the apartment, then sold it for a two-thousand-dollar profit.

As Kravinsky acquired a taste for property, he looked for ways to satisfy his idealistic self—in which good intentions were mixed with habits of self-criticism and a preëmptive resentment about being ridiculed or undervalued. In 1978, he began to work with socially and emotionally troubled students in Philadel-

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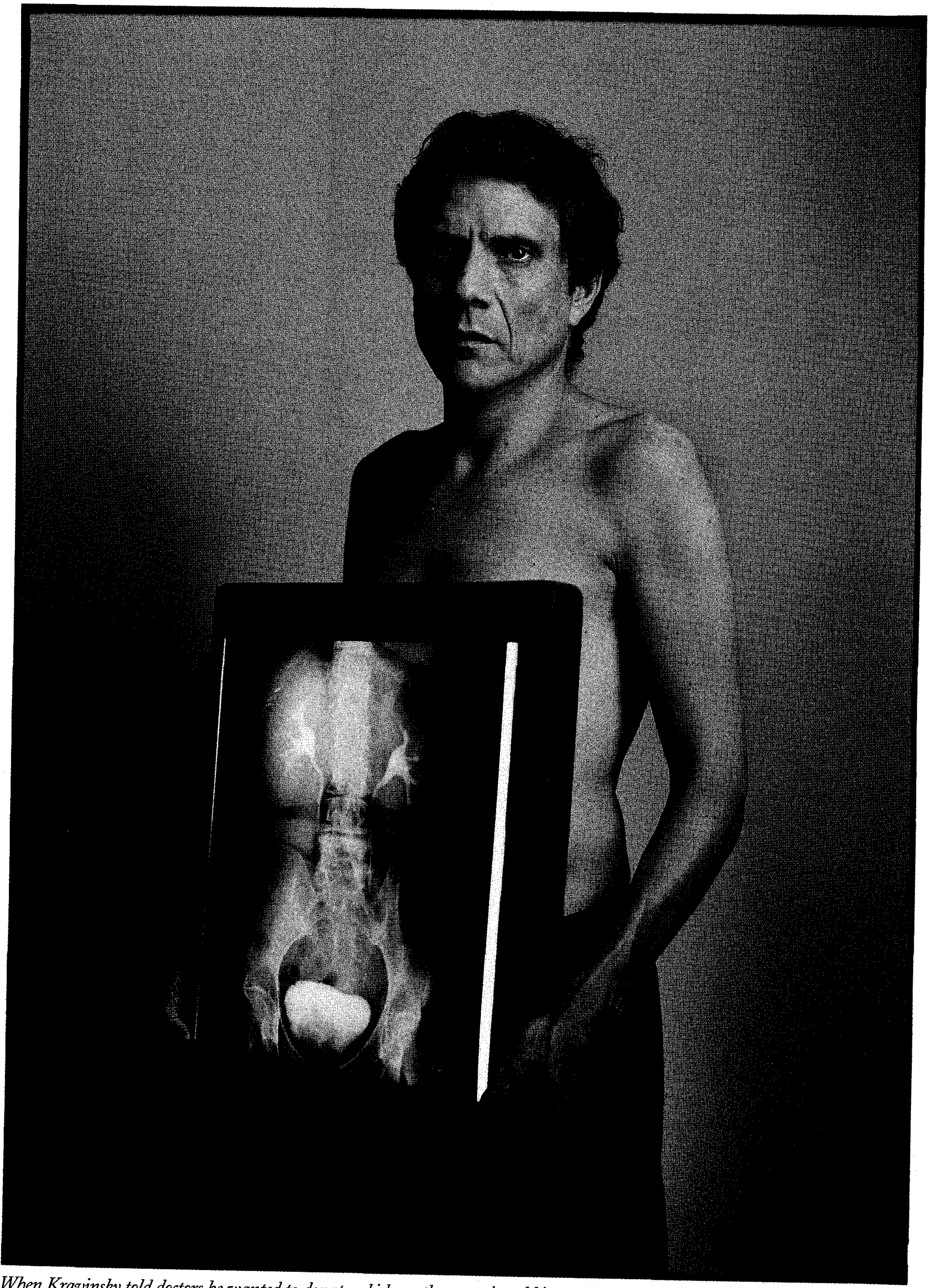
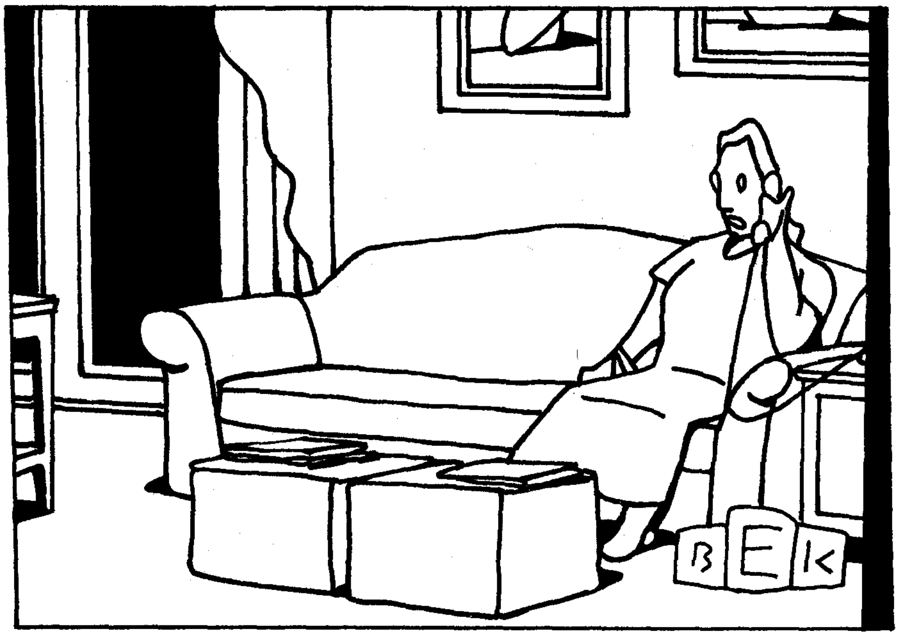


When Kravinsky told doctors he wanted to donate a kidney, they questioned his mental state. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.



“Is it casual casual or expensive casual?”

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phia’s public schools. “I became a teacher in the ghetto,” Kravinsky recalls. “Everyone I went to college with laughed at that. I was written off as a failure.”

The job offered moral satisfaction, but it also depressed Kravinsky—his pride in self-sacrifice counterbalanced by the thought that he was being taken for a ride. (Once, after school, he took a promising student to the theatre and, as he walked the boy home, he was mugged in a way that made Kravinsky think he might have been set up.) He grew more involved in real estate: he bought a condo, then a house in Maine; his deals became grander, and he began to see profits of tens of thousands of dollars. “Nobody in my family had ever made that much money,” he said. He spent very sparingly, preferring to reinvest; by 1982, he owned a three-story building near the University of Pennsylvania campus, but he lived in the smallest, gloomiest apartment, with no shower, kitchen, or windows.

Barry Katz, who met Kravinsky around this time, and who is now a developer of luxury homes in Connecticut, found him to be brilliant and articulate, “with the kind of intensity you don’t encounter in many people. He also had a lost-puppy quality.” Kravinsky had skipped a year in high school and one in college, and, according to Edward Miller, another old friend, who is now a lecturer in English literature, his intellectual and emotional maturity seemed out of step. “You could call it high-school-geek syndrome,” Miller said.

In 1984, Kravinsky was devastated by the death of Adria, the elder of his two sisters, from lung cancer. She was thirty-three; Zell was thirty. “She was the only person in my family who liked me in any meaningful way,” Kravinsky said, describing the guilt he still feels for not showing her enough affection, and for not persuading her to quit smoking. “We were close, but there were so many things that kept me from spending more time with her. I wish I could go back.” Kravinsky entered a period of deep depression. He shared a house with Miller, who remembers that Kravinsky mostly stayed in his room, writing poetry on a typewriter. Kravinsky stopped teaching in 1986, and he gave two of his three properties to his surviving sister, Hilary, and sold the other.

It was a despairing time, but it jolted Kravinsky out of the life of the self-abnegating schoolteacher. He expanded his intellectual ambitions, completing a Ph.D. in composition theory at Penn’s School of Education. (His unusual dissertation proposed a “table of rhetorical elements,” which was inspired by the periodic table.) He also took courses at the New School, in New York, and at the School of Criticism and Theory, at Dartmouth; in 1990, he began a second Ph.D. at Penn, with a dissertation, “Paradise Glossed,” that dissected the rhetoric of Milton with mathematical rigor. At Penn, he started teaching undergraduate courses in Renaissance literature, and met and married Emily Finkelstein, a doctor who is now a psychiatrist with an expertise in eating disorders. Kravinsky became a resident adviser, and the couple lived frugally in student housing. (“Free rent, free meals—the greatest deal in the world,” Kravinsky recalled.) They had the first of four children in 1991.

Kravinsky’s Milton dissertation was “an intense close reading and quite wonderful,” according to Maureen Quilligan, then the graduate chairperson of Penn’s English department and now a professor at Duke. “It’s one of the best I’ve ever read. It sounded like deconstruction, although he’d got there without having to do any deconstruction theory.” After it was finished, Kravinsky taught an undergraduate Milton course at Penn that Quilligan describes as “fantastically successful—the kids responded to it with the wildest enthusiasm, and they worked hard for him and had a sublime intellectual experience.” At the end of each lecture, Kravinsky would stand at the door and shake hands with every student. “He said he was hunting for another Milton,” Quilligan remembers.

Though he was admired by students—and had impeccable leftist credentials—he was galled to find that his intellectual interests were considered insufficiently avant-garde by academe. As Kravinsky saw it, “What they didn’t like was that Milton was the great classical liberal. Classical liberalism, bourgeois liberalism—they felt the same way about it as my father.” Quilligan says that he was handicapped by “the eccentricity of his intellectual and spiritual intensity, added to the fact that he had written about a single white male author.” Kravinsky recalls going to job interviews carrying letters of recommendation from scholars as distinguished as Stanley Fish, “and at every one they said, ‘You have a spectacular portfolio, both of your Ph.D.s are relevant, Fish said you “can do anything”—but we’re looking for diversity.’ ” Only the University of Helsinki offered him a job.

By 1994, he had decided to give up on an academic career. Instead, he would make a living in real estate. Kravinsky said that his wife was skeptical. "She said I'd become a bum," he told me. But, thanks to his earlier real-estate record, and his evident mathematical brilliance, Kravinsky was able to persuade the United Valley Bank to lend him two million dollars, with which he bought two apartment buildings—around a hundred and fifty thousand square feet in total—one near Penn, the other near St. Joseph's University. Kravinsky knew that in a recession people will go back to school, and that the ratio of rent to property prices will be highest where a university is in a run-down urban area. He was also fearless about being highly leveraged.

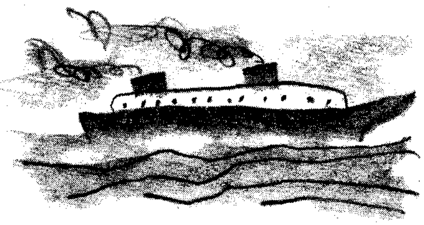
Kravinsky was improvising—"Nobody ever taught me how to succeed, or took me under their wing"—but his portfolio quickly grew, and within a year he had assets of six million dollars and debts of four million. Though he was now wealthy, he spent no more than he had before, with the exception of a hundred-and-thirty-thousand-dollar house that he bought in Jenkintown, a Philadelphia suburb, in 1995. (His second child had just been born.) "There was little of the mogul apparent to the eye," Barry Katz said. Even to his close associates, Kravinsky's business seemed implausible. Edward Miller took a job with him as an apartment manager but was never convinced that the property empire was real. "I didn't fully believe it," he told me. "I thought that somehow it was a deck of cards." These mistaken thoughts were reinforced by seeing "the most disorganized, chaotic organization you can imagine—leases at the bottom of closets, under the toilets, soaking wet." Miller was also surprised to see how blithely neglectful Kravinsky could sometimes be of contractors and janitors, as if he were grateful for the chance to take a vacation from the patient, solicitous persona he showed to his friends.

Property management ultimately did not suit Kravinsky—" 'Tenants and toilets'; there's a phrase that suggests the agony," he said—and in 1998 he began selling most of his rental properties (now about four hundred apartments) and turning to commercial real estate, investing at a level where the building is a mere premise for an intricate dance of numbers. "Everything else can change, but numbers remain the same; numbers are your best friends," Kravinsky said. "I needed to leverage my intellect, return to math."

Kravinsky bought supermarkets and warehouses; that is, he looked for tenants with good credit ratings and with long leases, then paid for the buildings with loans bundled into bonds by Wall Street banks and sold to institutional investors. These loans have a singular advantage: if things go wrong, nobody comes for your stereo. In 1999, in a typical deal, Kravinsky bought a clothing-distribution center in Ohio for $16.8 million. He put up $1.1 million and borrowed $15.7 million. If the building decreased in value by a hundred per cent, he would lose $1.1 million; if it increased in value by a hundred per cent, he would make $16.8 million.

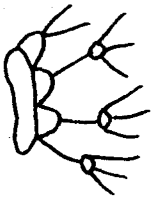
"Most people think the more you borrow the riskier it is," Kravinsky has said. "In my system, the more you borrow the safer it is." (On a single day in April, 1999, he borrowed thirty-two million dollars. He remembers Emily asking, "How much do we have to pay on that?" It was around ten thousand dollars a day. She said, dryly, "Well, if worst comes to worst, I can just treat a hundred people a day.") Kravinsky made full use of the tax advantages of commercial-real-estate investments: in the eyes of the I.R.S., a shopping mall depreciates in value, like an office chair, and one can set that depreciation against income tax, overlooking the fact that a mall, over time, is likely to increase in value.

Kravinsky knew how to make money, but he had no talent for spending it. His investments were an expression of his intellect—they were splendid rhetorical gestures, and to take money out for, say, a swimming pool would be to lose the debate. Even as he became rich, he was arguing at home against buying two minivans to replace a 1985 Toyota Camry. (He eventually gave in, and lost the Camry, which has since become an object of regret and longing.) The children did not get pocket money, and Emily had to fight to have the front porch repaired. ("Emily was certainly complicit in the family's frugality, but she became frustrated by Zell's refusal to spend money," a friend of the Kravinskys' told me.) Kravinsky worked from home. He recalled how one well-dressed man came to interview for an accountant's job and, seeing Kravinsky's modest home and casual dress, ran away. Kravinsky watched him disappear down the street and called out, "Where are you going?" The interviewee shouted, "I don't believe you," and kept running.



About three years ago, as Kravinsky's assets rose to nearly forty-five million dollars—a million square feet of commercial real estate, along with lofts, houses, and condos—friends began to hear him talk of giving all his assets to charity. He had long entertained philanthropic thoughts, although, as Katz told me, "I don't think it ever occurred to Zell that the by-product of what he was doing would be wealth on this scale." In 1998, Kravinsky had tried to donate some properties and empty lots to the University of Pennsylvania. He says that the university was wary of him, and "didn't even take me out to lunch." As his portfolio grew, however, Kravinsky's charitable impulse became more urgent. Edward Miller remembers sitting at his dining table one night with Kravinsky and James Kahn, "and Zell began to talk of giving away his wealth. And we said, 'Don't do it.' " Kahn asked him why he didn't give away a third of his fortune, and use the rest to become richer, and ultimately give even more money away. As Miller recalled, "We berated him for three or four hours. We said, 'You're depressed.' He seemed like King Lear, dividing his kingdom so he could 'unburdened crawl toward death.' "

For the moment, Kravinsky's friends prevailed. "I think he wanted to be talked out of it," Miller said. But Kravinsky, the skilled rhetorician, seems to have discovered something unanswerable in his own rhetoric. "The reasons for giving a little are the reasons for giving a lot, and the reasons for giving a lot are the reasons for giving more," he recently said. Kravinsky feared that he might lose his assets, or his impulse to give, or that his wife would challenge the idea. Emily was philanthropically inclined, but, as Kravinsky recalled it, he needed to "walk her into the idea" of total divestment—gift by gift, keeping the emphasis on public health, which attracted her, and promising that quitting real estate would bring him closer to the family. "I said I'd have more time for the kids," he told me. "She thought it was crazy to give everything away, but she said, 'At least we'll be out of the business.'" The gifts were made with her blessing and in her name. "My impression was that she decided she didn't want to be made out to be a Scrooge," a friend of the Kravinskys' told me.



In 2002, Zell and Emily gave an eighty-seven-thousand-square-foot apartment building to a school for the disabled in Philadelphia. The same year, they gave two gifts, worth $6.2 million, to the Centers for Disease Control Foundation. The gifts were partly in the form of a distribution center, four condominiums, three houses, and a parking lot; Kravinsky placed them in a fund named for his late sister, Adria. In March, 2003, the Kravinskys created the Adria Kravinsky Foundation, to support a School of Public Health at Ohio State University; the gift included three warehouses, four department stores, and a shopping center in Indianapolis. Together, these were worth around thirty million dollars. Karen Holbrook, the president of O.S.U., called the gift "a magnificent commitment."

Kravinsky had put some money aside—he had established trust funds for his wife, his children, and the children of his surviving sister. But his personal assets were now reduced to a house (on which he had a large mortgage), two minivans, and about eighty thousand dollars in stocks and cash. According to Katz, "He gave away the money because he had it and there were people who needed it. But it changed his way of looking at himself. He decided the purpose of his life was to give away things."

Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, is a mixed-income community of about four thousand people which tries to maintain a small-town character within the sprawl of housing developments and shopping malls just north of Philadelphia. I made my first visit to Kravinsky in November, parking in front of a wooden-shingled house with a broken photocopier on the front porch and a tangle of bicycles, tricycles, and wagons. A handwritten sign by the door, a marker of spousal frustration, read, "Put Your Keys Away Before You Forget."

Kravinsky came to the door several minutes after I rang the bell. He is slight, and looked both boyish and wan, with pale, almost translucent skin. He wore sneakers, a blue plaid shirt, and tan trousers with an elasticized waist. He seemed distracted, and I realized later that the timing of my visit was awkward: he knew that his wife would not want a reporter in the house, but she had gone out, and two of his four young children were home, so he could not immediately go out to lunch with me.

He invited me into a house crowded with stuff, including a treadmill in the middle of the living room. He cleared away enough books and toys for me to sit down on a sofa. His daughter, who is nine, came into the room to say hello, but when Emily Kravinsky came home, a moment later, she walked straight past us into the kitchen, taking the girl with her. Kravinsky followed. He came back after a few minutes and picked up his coat, and as we left the house he said, "She wants us out of here."

We drove to a restaurant in a nearby mini-mall. He ordered a mushroom sandwich and a cup of warm water that he didn't touch. "I used to feel that I had to be good, truly good in my heart and spirit, in order to do good," he said, in a soft voice. "But it's the other way around: if you do good, you become better. With each thing I've given away, I've been *more* certain of the need to give more away. And at the end of it maybe I will be good. But what are they going to say—that I'm depressed? I am, but this isn't suicidal. I'm depressed because I haven't done enough."

Within a few minutes, Kravinsky had talked of Aristotle, Nietzsche, and the Talmud, and, in less approving terms, of the actor Billy Crudup, who had just left his pregnant girlfriend for another woman. ("How do you like that!") Kravinsky's mostly elevated range of reference, along with a rhetorical formality and a confessional tone, sometimes gave the impression that he was reading from his collected letters. "What I aspire to is ethical ecstasy," he said. "*Ex stasis:* standing out of myself, where I'd lose my punishing ego. It's tremendously burdensome to me." Once achieved, "the significant locus would be in the sphere of others."

His cell phone rang, and a mental switch was flicked: "You have to do a ten-thirty-one and put fresh money in on terms that are just as leveraged . . . going eight per cent over debt. . . . I think we should do it. It's nice to start with a blue chip."

These contrasting discourses have one clear point of contact. In our conversations, Kravinsky showed an almost rhapsodic appreciation of ratios. In short, ratios are dependable and life is not. "No number is significant in itself: its only significance is in relation to other numbers," he said. "I try to rely on relationships between numbers, because those relationships are constant—unlike Billy Crudup and the woman he impregnated. Even if the other relationships in our lives are going to hell in a handbasket, numbers continue to coöperate with one another."

In the months following the first of Kravinsky's financial gifts, a new ratio began to preoccupy him: the one-in-four-thousand chance that a person has of dying in an operation to donate a kidney. In early 2003, he read an article in the *Wall Street Journal* that introduced him to the idea of nondirected kidney donations, in which an altruistic-minded person gives an organ to benefit a stranger—someone in the pool of sixty thousand people on America's kidney-transplant waiting list. The demand for kidneys outstrips the supply; the buying and selling of organs is illegal, and although there are between fifteen and twenty thousand deaths in America each year that could yield organs, about half of families deny permission for the bodies of their relatives to be used in this way, often disregarding the dead person's donor card. Kravinsky was so struck by the article that he cut it out and kept it in a desk drawer.

The notion of nondirected organ donation is not new. Joseph E. Murray, who directed the first successful human kidney-transplant operation, in 1954, in Boston, recently recalled that, by that time, he had received three offers of kidneys—from a prisoner, a homeless man, and a nun. They could not be accepted; early transplants were generally between identical twins, for a precise biological match. But in the early sixties advances in immunosuppressant drugs allowed surgeons to begin transplanting from deceased donors to unrelated recipients and from living donors other than twins—typically, blood relatives. By 1963, there were no medical barriers to nondirected donation. But while kidney transplants became almost routine—last year, there were sixty-five hundred living-donor and eighty-seven hundred deceased-donor transplants in America—nondirected donation did not.

On occasion, altruists engaged in a somewhat less radical practice, donating kidneys to people they had not met but whose plights had attracted their attention (say, through a newspaper article). But doctors were resistant even to this idea, and questioned the sanity of these donors; according to a paper published in *Seminars in Psychiatry* in 1971, the practice was viewed by most physicians as "impulsive, suspect, and repugnant." Doctors were also under the impression, now revised, that related donations were almost always better than unrelated ones. In addition, a kidney-removal operation was initially far more painful and invasive than it later became; until the mid-nineties, it was often necessary to break the donor's rib, and the donor was frequently left with a long scar.

In the late nineties, by coincidence, two donors independently approached two hospitals with a request to make a nondirected kidney donation, and neither hospital could think of a good reason for turning them away. Joyce Roush, a transplant nurse from Indiana, introduced herself to Lloyd Ratner, a leading transplant surgeon then at Johns Hopkins, in Baltimore. "I was quite skeptical," Ratner told me. "I said, 'Give me a call and we'll consider,' thinking she'd never call me. She called and called." And at the University of Minnesota a would-be donor with a long record of altruistic acts made the same request, saying, "I want to do this and go home and be happy." Following bioethical consultation, and psychiatric testing of the donors, the hospitals accepted the offers: in Minnesota, the anonymous donor's kidney was transplanted in August, 1999; a few weeks later, at Johns Hopkins, Joyce Roush donated one to a thirteen-year-old boy. Now, several dozen nondirected donations are performed each year in the U.S.

Kravinsky considered the risks. Although Richard Herrick, who received the first kidney transplant, died eight years later, Ronald Herrick, his donor and twin brother, is still alive. As Herrick's example suggests, and medical research confirms, there are no health disadvantages to living with one kidney. One is enough—it grows a little bigger—and the notion that a spare should be packed for emergencies is misconceived: nearly all kidney disease affects both.

The risks are in the operation. "I had a one-in-four-thousand chance of dying," Kravinsky told me. "But my recipient had a certain death facing her." To Kravinsky, this was straightforward: "I'd be valuing my life at four thousand times hers if I let consideration of mortality sway me."

He made one other calculation: there was a chance that one of his four children—then aged between three and eleven—might need a kidney that only he could supply. Kravinsky took into account the rarity of childhood kidney disease, the fact that he had only ten or so years left as a viable donor, and the fact that siblings tend to be the best kidney matches—his children were well provided with siblings. He decided that the risk was no greater than one in two hundred and fifty thousand, and that it was a risk he could accept. In fact, Kravinsky began to think of a donation as "a treat to myself. I really thought of it as something pleasurable."

In a now famous 1972 essay, "Famine, Affluence and Morality," the Australian philosopher Peter Singer set up the ethical puzzle that has become known as the Shallow Pond and the Envelope. In the first case, a child has fallen into a shallow pond and is drowning; Singer considers saving the child, and reflects on the inconvenience of muddy clothes. In the second, he is asked by the Bengal Relief Fund to send a donation to save the lives of children overseas.

To ignore the child in the pond would be despicable, most people would agree; to ignore an envelope from a charity would not be. (And the law supports that view.) But Singer's contention was that the two derelictions are ethically alike. "If we can prevent something bad without sacrificing anything of comparable significance, we ought to do it," he has written. To allow harm is to do harm; it is wrong not to give money that you do not need for the most basic necessities.

Many philosophers disagree—and would argue, in one way or another, that we can have greater faith in our intuitive moral judgments. Colin McGinn, a philosopher at Rutgers, has called Singer's principle "positively bad, morally speaking," for "it encourages a way of life in which many important values are sacrificed to generalized altruism" and devalues "spending one's energies on things other than helping suffering people in distant lands. . . . Just think of how much the human race would have lost if Newton and Darwin and Leonardo and Socrates had spent their time on charitable acts!" Singer has his adherents: in

"You forgot the launch codes."

1996, Peter Unger, a philosopher at New York University, published "Living High and Letting Die," an extension of Singer's analysis whose aim was to show how we let ourselves off the ethical hook too easily. According to Unger, we placate our consciences with an "illusion of innocence."

By the spring of 2003, Zell Kravinsky had become a man with no such illusion. "It seems to me crystal clear that I should be giving all my money away and donating all of my time and energy," Kravinsky said, and he speculated that failure to be this generous was corrosive, in a way that most people don't recognize. "Maybe that's why we're fatigued all the time," he mused—from "the effort" of disregarding the greater need of others. "Maybe that's why we break down and suffer depressions: we have a sense that there's something we should be remembering and we're not. Maybe that's what we should be remembering—that other people are suffering."

He discussed the idea of kidney donation with his family and friends. "I thought, at first, that people would understand," Kravinsky told me. "But they don't understand math. That's an American pastime—grossly misunderstanding math. I've had to repeat it over and over. Some people eventually got it. But many people felt the way my wife did: she said, 'No matter how infinitesimal the risk to your family, we're your family, and the recipient doesn't count.'"

Arguments about philanthropic extremes tend to be arguments about families. In "Bleak House," Dickens says of his character Mrs. Jellyby that she "could see nothing nearer than Africa": in a home full of trash, she is so busy helping the unfortunate abroad that she disregards her children, who are filthy and covered with bruises—the "notched memoranda of their accidents." As Esther Summerson, the novel's moral center, says of Mrs. Jellyby, "It is right to begin with the obligations of home. . . . While those are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them." This is a reasonable case for philanthropic restraint, but it's also an excuse for philanthropic inaction: the narrator of Nick Hornby's novel "How to Be Good" wrestles with this argument, guiltily, after her husband makes a sudden conversion to virtue—giving away money and goods, and offering their spare room to a homeless teen-ager. "I'm a liberal's worst nightmare," her husband says, in response to the narrator's Esther-like fears for her children's comfort. "I think everything you think. But I'm going to walk it like I talk it."

Chuck Collins, a great-grandson of Oscar Mayer, is a rare nonfictional example of someone who gave away all his assets during his lifetime—a half-million-dollar inheritance, which he donated to charity nearly twenty years ago. He became used to hearing pleas in behalf of his (then only potential) offspring. "People would say, 'That's fine, you can be reckless in your own life, but you shouldn't do that to your children,'" Collins told me. "But I think parents make decisions for their kids all the time—that's what parenting is." He now has a daughter, who does not live like a Jellyby. "Of course, we have to respond to our immediate family, but, once they're O.K., we need to expand the circle. A larger sense of family is a radical idea, but we get into trouble as a society when we don't see that we're in the same boat."

Kravinsky's conversations with his family, and about his family, left him feeling like an alien. "The sacrosanct commitment to the family is the rationalization for all manner of greed and selfishness," he said. "Nobody says, 'I'm working for the tobacco company because I like the money.' They say, 'Well, you know, I hate to do it, but I'm saving up for the kids.' Everything is excused that way. To me, it's obscene."

During one of our conversations, I asked Kravinsky to calculate a ratio between his love for his children and his love for unknown children. Many people would refuse to engage in this kind of thought experiment, but Kravinsky paused for only a moment. "I don't know where I'd set it, but I would not let many children die so my kids could live," he said. "I don't think that two kids should die so that one of my kids has comfort, and I don't know that two children should die so that one of my kids lives."

Judith Jarvis Thomson, a philosopher at M.I.T. and the author of "The Realm of Rights," later told me, "His children are

NO SHADOW

My friend Deane took me into the Yuba Goldfields. That's at the lower
Yuba river outflow where it enters the Sacramento Valley flatlands,
a mile-wide stretch between grass and blue oak meadows. It goes on
for ten miles. Here's where the mining tailings got dropped off by
the wandering riverbed of the 1870s—forty miles downstream
from where the giant hoses washed them off Sierra slopes.

We were walking on blue lupine-covered rounded hundred-foot gravel
hills till we stood over the springtime rush of water. Watched a female
osprey hunting along the main river channel. Her flight shot up, down,
all sides, suddenly fell feet first into the river and emerged with a fish.
Maybe fooling the fish by zigzagging—so—no hawk shadow. Carole
said later, that's like trying to do za-zen without your self entering into it.

Standing on a gravel hill by the lower Yuba
can see down west a giant Air Force cargo plane from Beale
hang-gliding down to land
strangely slow over the tumbled dredged-out goldfields—
practice run
shadow of a cargo jet—soon gone

no-shadow of an osprey

still here

—*Gary Snyder*

presumably no more valuable to the universe than anybody else's children are, but the universe doesn't really care about *any* children—yours or mine or anybody else's. A father who says, 'I'm no more concerned about my children's lives than about anybody else's life' is just flatly a defective parent; he's deficient in views that parents ought to have, whether it maximizes utility or not."

Someone who knows both Kravinskys well told me, "If your spouse is doing something to himself, he is, to a certain extent, doing it to you also. Zell would be an exasperating person to be married to." Susan Katz, the wife of Kravinsky's friend Barry Katz, told me, "I thought he was crazy. I thought it was just weird. If you're a father, you can't put your life at risk." Kravinsky said that his wife's initial attitude echoed these sentiments—she was "adamantly opposed," on the ground of familial responsibility. She eventually grew more accepting of the idea, at least in the abstract. During a recent telephone conversation in which her anger about Zell's actions was made clear, Emily disputed this description, saying that her opposition was constant, and derived from her opinion that Zell, who has digestive difficulties, was unsuited to an operation of this kind. "I have no objection to nondirected organ donations," she said. "I think they're a very good thing, if the donor is medically appropriate for elective surgery, and if the donation is carried out in a medical center that's prepared to provide good care."

The rest was math and poetry: Kravinsky has said that he was driven by "the mathematical calculus of utilitarianism," which gives primacy to the idea of the "greatest good." But he acknowledges, too, another impulse, which emanated from what he calls his romantic or neurotic self: to give a kidney was a self-sacrificing, self-dramatizing act. The utilitarian in Kravinsky might give up his coat to a stranger, if to have no coat would not disable him as a champion of the coatless; but the romantic in Kravinsky would give the coat unquestioningly, loudly renounce coat-wearing worldwide, and then give away his pants.

In April, 2003, Kravinsky called the Albert Einstein Medical Center, an inner-city hospital where he could be fairly confident that a donated kidney would go to a low-income African-American patient. Kravinsky told me that the transplant coördinator who spoke to him was "pretty leery of the whole thing, and kept telling me there was no payment." The hospital had never operated on a nondirected donor. But he went there to meet a surgeon, who believed Kravinsky's reports of two Ph.D.s and his philanthropy only after doing a Google search, and then a psychiatrist, who told him, "You're doing something you don't have to do." Kravinsky replied, "I *do* have to do it. You're missing the whole point. It's as much a necessity as food, water, and air."

Kravinsky acknowledged that he suffered from depression and that he did not have his wife's approval for the donation. He allowed the hospital to speak to his own psychiatrist, but said that he would not be able to bring Emily in for joint consultations. The hospital accepted this, after officials learned that family support of nondirected donors is often hesitant, at best. "The consensus was, if this is what he wants to do and he's a competent individual, you can't deny him because someone doesn't want him to do it," Radi Zaki, the director of the Center for Renal Disease at Albert Einstein, said. "But we made the process hard for him. We delayed, we put him off. The more impatient he got, the more delay I gave him. You want to make sure this is the real deal."

In June, Kravinsky was accepted for the operation. Donnell Reid, a twenty-nine-year-old single black woman studying for a degree in social work, whose hypertension had forced her to undergo dialysis for eight years, was informed that she was the possible recipient of a kidney from a nondirected donor. "It was so surreal," she recently told me. "You're going about your life, and then you get this phone call." She went in for tests, then waited. "I prayed. I left it in God's hands." She told none of her friends: "It was such an overwhelming thing, such an awesome thing, I wanted to meditate on it on my own." A week later, on July 7th, she learned that she had been selected for the operation, and the next day, at Kravinsky's request, they met at the transplant center. They talked for two hours. She described her plans for the future, and thanked him for a generosity "beyond words."

On July 22nd, Kravinsky left home early—"I snuck out"—and drove to the hospital, where Zaki asked him again if he would like to reconsider his decision. "He was very calm," Zaki recalls. Kravinsky had not told his wife the details of his plan, but he had approached a reporter at the Philadelphia *Daily News*, a local tabloid, which ran a story that morning. In a three-hour operation that started at 8 A.M.—a laparoscopic removal, requiring minimal incisions—he gave up his right kidney to Reid, who was in the room next door.

The next morning, Kravinsky called his wife from his hospital bed. Because of his digestive complications, he had to be taken off opiate-based painkillers, and he says that he took nothing in their place. (Zaki, affectionately describing Kravinsky as a "dramatic" patient, disputed this memory of total abstinence.) Zell asked Emily for help: "She was furious. She didn't want me to die, but, on the other hand, she was beyond human rage." She said that she was willing to talk to the doctors about his treatment. She also threatened to divorce him.

At that moment, Kravinsky recalled, "I really thought I might have shot it with my family." His parents were also appalled. When Reeda Kravinsky visited her son in the hospital, she recalled, "I was so filled with anger that I didn't speak." Meanwhile, Kravinsky's mind was still turning on philanthropic questions. "I lay there in the hospital, and I thought about all my other organs. When I do something good, I feel that I can do more; I burn to do more. It's a heady feeling." He went home after four days, and by then he was wondering if he should give away his other kidney.

A few weeks ago, in a Barnes & Noble bookstore in Jenkintown, Kravinsky pulled out his shirt a couple of inches and showed me a tidy scar, no more than six inches long, on his right

hip. “Once in a while, I remember I only have one kidney,” he said, smiling—apparently struck anew by the thought that the donation had been a surgical act as well as a symbolic one. “It feels a little weird—‘Oh, yeah, I only have one!’—but the other body parts are very happy, they have breathing room.” It was an unusually upbeat thought, connected to a moment of moral clarity. “It was a good deed,” he said. “However I screw up morally in the future, this is something nobody can take away.”

Kravinsky’s mood had improved since our first meeting, four months after the operation, when he had seemed vulnerable. He was always engaging, eccentric company—during lunch at a restaurant, he opened twenty packets of sugar and poured the contents into his mouth; he gave the impression that he would rather wait forever in a stationary elevator than be the one to press the button—but he was dispirited. He often spoke in fateful terms about his marriage, which had held together but was under constant stress. He worried about his relationship with his children—he showed me touching poems he had written about them—and their relationship with the world. (In the schoolyard, a child had approached one of his sons, saying, “Why don’t you just donate me that cheese stick?”) He said he had lost his sense of direction. “I feel unmoored,” he told me.

Having redefined his life as a continuing donation, but having given away everything that came immediately to hand, Kravinsky was not sure how to proceed. His utilitarian and romantic selves were now in competition, and he did not trust his ability to distinguish between the two, or to distinguish between them and vanity. He saw a baffling choice between engagement and disengagement, between creating wealth and withdrawing into a life of poverty. When Kravinsky’s thoughts migrated to rhetorical extremes, the choice seemed to be between life and death.

Several times, Kravinsky talked of giving away his other kidney and living on dialysis, and then he would upbraid himself for hesitating. “If I didn’t have kids, and I saw a child who was dying for want of a kidney, I would offer mine,” he said. He sometimes imagined a full-body donation. “My organs could save several people if I gave my whole body away,” he told me. “But I don’t think I can do that to my family. Or, at least, I can’t endure the humiliation. I’ve thought about it: my kids would be under a cloud, everybody would pillory me as a showboat or a suicide. I know it’s a thing I ought to do; other lives are equal to my own, and I could save at least three or four. I have fantasized about it. I’ve dreamed about it. But I don’t have the nerve.” He said that “before it happened I’d have to endure the screams and yells from my family. Then I would be committed.” He laughed. “My wife and my sister are psychiatrists.”

Kravinsky could see one clear role for himself: as a promoter of a free market in kidneys, an idea with limited but growing intellectual support. Richard A. Epstein, a libertarian law professor at the University of Chicago, championed this argument in his 1999 book, “Mortal Peril: Our Inalienable Right to Health Care?,” urging a “frontal assault on the present legal regime” and its “moral philosophy of false comradeship.” He wrote, “No one disputes the Beatles’ proposition that ‘money can’t buy you love,’ but the proposition does not require any form of *ban* on the payment of cash in certain human relations.” Epstein recently told me, “When I talk about this now, nobody treats me as a complete kook. People are a little more respectful.” In Kravinsky’s opinion, an efficient market would quickly set a price for a kidney at ten thousand dollars or so. “College kids would do it. A college kid goes to a party, there’s a greater risk of dying from drugs or alcohol or a car crash than one in four thousand.” He said that any anxiety about exploitation was misplaced: “If the risk is lower than the other ways to make the money, where’s the exploitation? How dare people be so condescending.”

A few weeks after this discussion, Kravinsky called me. He had just been approached by a local woman in her forties who had spent years on dialysis, and who was running out of places on the body where a dialysis needle can enter a vein. She wanted to buy a kidney. Not long before, two young women had jointly written to Kravinsky; both were interested in selling a kidney. He told me that he had arranged to bring the women together at a café near his house. He would be an unpaid broker in a kidney sale. “I’ll take the heat, which will probably mean getting arrested,” he said. (The 1984 National Organ Transplantation Act prohibits the sale of kidneys.) “I feel very nervous, but I feel the decision’s been made—because I’m not going to let that woman die, and who else in America would do this? I’m the only person who can save her life by setting this up. I’m not going to do anything that stands in the way of saving a life, whether it's my money, my reputation. It's a very big step, but there's no choice. The choice is, I say no and the rest of my life I know that someone died."

He called me when he got home, a few hours later. "Oh, brother, she's in bad shape," he said of the would-be recipient. He said that "everyone had liked each other" at the meeting, and an agreement had been reached. The recipient would take a kidney from whichever of the two women was a better match: both would present themselves to a hospital as friends offering a donation. The sick woman had agreed to pay fifty thousand dollars for the organ.

Kravinsky was energized—he foresaw a test case, a shift in public opinion. He was ready to embrace infamy. But when we spoke again he was worried about legal consequences. "Can you imagine *me* in prison for five years?" he asked.

Later, when I brought up the subject once more, he said that a lawyer had told him to "just leave it alone." He was taking every opportunity to promote kidney donation, but he had given up the role of broker. Today, the three women remain in touch, but they have not yet closed a deal.

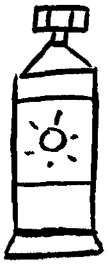
According to Kravinsky, his family was living on about sixty thousand dollars a year, from Emily's part-time medical practice and from interest derived from Zell's remaining capital. The children were in public schools; the minivans were paid for. "The real test of my vanity would be if I gave everything away," Kravinsky said. "Not just to the point of a working-class existence but to the point of poverty."

Yet even while Kravinsky aspired to a life spent "passing out pamphlets on the subway," as he put it, it pained him to think of giving up the language of finance, which he spoke so well. "To really achieve wealth, you have to have a love of money—you have to enjoy the play of numbers behind your eyelids," he said.

Indeed, near the end of last year, Kravinsky had begun talking to a local venture capitalist; together they planned a real-estate partnership that would invest on behalf of others in the kind of commercial property that Kravinsky had experience buying and selling. He would give his half of the shares to charity. Other charities could invest without paying fees. Kravinsky initially talked of this as a single stratum in a layered life of agitation, donation, and sacrifice, but this spring, as he began to talk to real-estate agents, the partnership began to emerge as a new full-time job. His mood lightened, and he seemed giddy whenever I overheard him using the jargon of amortization, appraisals, and conduit financing. "I do feel a kind of bonhomie—it's strange—in business," he admitted.

Not long ago, Kravinsky toured a Cingular wireless-call center in eastern Kentucky, a building being offered at thirteen million dollars. His guide, the office manager, was a young tanned woman who wore pin-striped trousers. Kravinsky, bouncy and a little flirtatious, looked like a graduate student in geology, and, as he walked among the thousand desks laid out in honeycomb arrangements under signs reading "I Am Proud to Be Part of the Perfectly Awesome Crew," everyone looked up. "It's just a glue-down carpet?" he asked the office manager. "Are these load-bearing walls? Is that eight inches of concrete?" At the end of the tour, he said, with feeling, "This is a beautiful center, I have to say."

He was no longer adrift, yet he had not discovered ethical ecstasy, either. Peter Singer has called him "a remarkable person who has taken very seriously questions of what are our moral obligations to assist people." He says, "I think it's very difficult for people to go as far as he has, and I don't think we should blame people who don't, but we should admire those who do."



Kravinsky himself held on to self-doubt. He did buy the Kentucky call center; soon afterward, he spent the night at the sunny, high-ceilinged home of Barry and Susan Katz, in Westport, Connecticut. He got up late, and, long after his friends had finished breakfast, he sat eating cereal at the head of a polished black table. He was unrested, and was troubled by the thought that a renewed career in real estate might block his path to virtue.

"But don't you think giving away forty-five million dollars was a good first step?" Barry Katz asked him, taking up the challenge of having moral absolutism as a weekend house guest.

"No," Kravinsky replied. "That's not the hard part. The hard part is the last ten thousand dollars a year—when you have to live so cheaply you can't function in the business world." He added, "If I need a coat to visit an investment banker's office because I'll look bizarre if I don't have one, but then I see somebody shiver, I should give my coat to him."

"But what if you made enough money, after meeting with the investment banker, to fund research into AIDS prevention, something extremely good for the world?" Katz asked. "You're not going to get very far in an investment banker's office wearing sackcloth."

"I think suits are despicable. Suits and ties. I think I should go into the office naked." Kravinsky was smiling. "If I went into the office of a banker naked, I'd be . . ."

"You'd be arrested," Katz said.

Katz remembered the time he had hung up on Kravinsky a few weeks before the kidney operation. "He almost broke off with you," Susan Katz told Kravinsky.

"Oh, Barry," Kravinsky said. "It isn't that I think people are evil. But it's a fact that our actions, in some sense our thoughts, let some people live and some people die."

Susan, sitting at the other end of the table, looked at Kravinsky with fond exasperation and asked, "This is how you think every day, really? That's got to be tough. It seems so sad. You seem so sad."

"Well, I am sad." Kravinsky had arranged everything within arm's reach—orange juice, mug, salt, sugar, cereal box—into a tight cluster on his placemat. His adventure in donation had been a rhetorical opportunity—a showcase for his underappreciated talent for argument. But for a moment the debate had slowed, and Kravinsky spoke less forcefully, in apparent recognition of the unequal ratio of sacrifice to sustenance, of good done to moral certainty felt.

"But shouldn't there be more joy in this?" Barry said.

"I don't think of it as something that's joyful. Why should I feel joy?"

"I just feel that if you really were on this path to enlightenment, whatever it is, you would feel joy."

"It's not enlightenment," Kravinsky said quietly. "It's the start of a moral life." ♦

FICTION

THE SHORE

BY RICHARD FORD

My client for this morning's 61 Surf Road showing is a welding contractor down from Parsippany, New Jersey, Mr. Clare Suddruth, with whom I've already done the toilsome but crucial real-estate spadework over the past months, which means that I've driven him around the Sea-Brite–Ortley Beach–Seaside Heights–Lavallette area on what I think of as a lay-of-the-land tour, during which the client gets to see everything for sale in his stated price range, endures no pressure from me, begins to think I'm his friend (since I'm squandering all these hours and gallons of gasoline with nothing in writing), comes in time to gab about his life—his failures, treacheries, and joys—lets me buy him a dozen lunches, and realizes that we're both pretty much cut out of the same coarse fustian and share many core values (the economy, Vietnam, the need to buy American even though the Japs build a better product, the millennium non-event, America's troubled youth, how much we'd hate to be young today), though we probably *don't* agree about the current Election 2000 impasse in Florida, which has the country at a standstill while the Republicans figure out how to steal it back. But, especially, we *do* see eye to eye about what constitutes a good house, and how most buyers are better off setting aside their original price targets in favor of stretching their pocketbooks, getting beyond the next dollar threshold (where the houses they *really* want are as plentiful as hoe handles), and doing a little belt-tightening while the economy's ebb and flow keeps their boat afloat, on course, and steaming ahead.

If this seems like cynical, insincere bamboozlement, bait-and-switch tricksterism, or just old-fashioned, leering faithlessness, let me assure you it's not. All any client ever has to say is "Look-it here, Bascombe, this really isn't how I see things. I want to stay right inside, not outside, my price window just the way I said I did when I sat down at your desk." If that's the story, then I'm ready to sell you what you want—if I have it. All the rest—the considered, heartfelt exchange of views, the finding of common ground, the beginning of true (if ephemeral) comradeship based on time spent in the same automobile front seat or front yard—any of that I'd do with the Terminix guy. All a person has to do is know his mind about things, which isn't as usual as it seems.

The fact is, I view my role as residential real-estate agent to have a lay therapist's dimension built right in. And that dimension includes the obligation to leave a client better than I found him or her (there's plenty in the realty literature to back me up on this). Many citizens set out to buy a house because of an indistinct yearning for which an actual house was never the right solution to begin with, and may be only a quick fix that briefly anchors and stabilizes them but never touches the deeper need, all the while managing to put them in the poorhouse. Most client contacts, in fact, never eventuate in a sale and often, like most human exposures, end after one encounter. Which isn't to say that the road *toward* a house—even if no sale is destined—is a road completely without benefit or good issue. A couple of the best friends I've made in the real-estate business are people I never sold a house to, and who, by the end of our time together, I didn't *want* to sell a house to (though I probably would've). One was an African-American lawyer, Geoff Murphy, who was determined to buy an eye-popping mansion at an eye-popping price, slap in the middle of the (all-white) Seminary section of my former home town of Haddam, New Jersey. On Atheneum Place, the richest street. I showed him four houses, bids were submitted on two, accepted on one. Earnest money was rendered, lawyers were called, documents drawn up, inspections completed, mortgages applied for, closing scheduled. But when I picked Geoff up at the August Inn to drive to the act-of-sale meeting, he got in my car clearly distressed. His dark-mahogany, lacquered-looking face had turned a pasty gray from a sleepless night. He was fidgety, he smoked a cigarette right in my car (which he'd never done before), he answered my genial patter in edgy monosyllables, then discovered that he'd forgotten his checkbook, so that we had to go back to the August—where for some reason it was sitting on the edge of the toilet. When we were back in the car, heading to the lawyers, I just said to him, "Look here. What's bothering you, Geoff? Do you have some reluctance? Because, if you do, I want you to stop right here. I'll call up Moncrieff and Barnacle and tell 'em the deal's gone south or we need more time. Whatever. You'll be back to your room in five minutes. This is not about me, it's about you. And your money." "Do you mean that?" Geoff said, his big honey-bear eyes beginning to take in the possibility that I might not be holding his feet to the fire. "I do mean it," I said.

Geoff and I, over the previous weeks, had talked casually of his life as we plowed around Haddam looking at houses. Born in the Druid Heights section of Baltimore, to stalwart parents who loved each other and worked multiple jobs so that he could go to Towson, Geoff had become the first college attendee in a family up from the Alabama cotton patch. Penn Law School followed fast. Chicago Business School. A stint in the Coast Guard. A pair of defective marriages. A lengthy bout with John Barleycorn, a diagnosis of early-onset diabetes, his children's disapproval of a much younger, white third wife, a union that wasn't working out but maybe had a chance if he could just get the two of them set up in the right circumstances—all this meant that Haddam was a perfect fit. Geoff's work as a high-priced restructuring litigator was in Newark, forty miles away. (A car and a driver were part of his deal.) His wife, Hollister (whom I'd met only once), was clearly a ball-buster and would be down the road in a heartbeat, if only due to the difference in their ages—fifty-five versus twenty-eight. Geoff needed, I felt, to do some serious tea-leaf reading and brow-furrowing and possibly take a stab at meditation and marriage counselling before he lashed himself to a $3.1-million, gaudy-as-hell, high-Victorian manor house, needing roof and pricey bathroom work, that was once owned by a whiskey baron and former New Jersey governor but where Geoff would spend most of his evenings alone, and where the neighbors would take fourteen years to ask him for cocktails, and then only do it once. In other words, he'd turn suicidal there. (Of course, I'd have made my ninety thousand, but what larger good would've been done?)

Long story short: Geoff asked me to make the unwelcome call to the sellers' lawyer. I made the call. I explained. The situation engendered a bit of abuse and minor epithet-swapping. Geoff swal-

MAIRA KALMAN, "BLUE WALL/RED HAIR" (2004)/JULIE SAUL GALLERY

lowed hard on half the up-front money. And he and I sang down the day—a cool March sun-streamer with no humidity—by driving over to New Hope, having shad with shad roe and a good New Zealand Gewürztraminer (he paid), and telling each other the rest of the stories of our lives. His actually included an aspiration to climb Mt. Kornaheho, and to do a stint in the Peace Corps in the spirit of "giving back" both to himself and to the world that his good parents selflessly gave him.

Geoff never did buy a house from me, never moved to Haddam, his wife didn't leave him, his kids reconciled, his parents died happy, he did his Peace Corps stint *with* his wife, and he now runs a boutique maple-syrup company in Vermont (they sell only the darkest, coarsest kind) and last year was elected selectman.

This is a perfect real-estate transaction, in my view, even though no house changed hands. If there weren't, now and then, such outside-the-envelope transactions, I'd be the first to say that the whole damn business wouldn't be worth the time of day.

I turn right off NJ 35, Sea-Brite, and toward the beach just at the closed-for-the-season Custom Condom Shoppe ("We build 'em to your specs"), and motor slowly down a narrow gravel lane of identical white-and-pastel summer "chalets," of which there must be thirty in this row, modest fronts facing in, with ten parallel lanes arranged, neighborhood-like, to the north and south, each named for a familiar New Jersey coastal bird (Sandpiper, Common Tern, etc.—I am driving down Cormorant Court). Here is where a good number of our weekly renters—Memorial Day to Columbus Day—spend their happy family vacations, cheek to cheek with hundreds of other souls opting for the same little vernal joys. At several of these chalets (all empty now), pre-winter fixup is under way. All-Honduran repair crews are up on ladders patching little green hip roofs in almost the same color, or are planing screen doors, or regrouting brick foundations after years of salt air. I own ten of these chalets and manage twenty-five more, and several of the Hondurans recognize my Suburban, and give a wave and a snicker at Don Francisco, which makes me mildly uncomfortable. There have been summer chalets in Sea-Brite since the thirties: five-hundred-square-foot cottages, two tiny bedrooms, one simple bath, beaverboard walls, Pullman kitchen, a propane tank, no yard, no grass, no shrubbery, no a/c, no TV, electric wall heaters, St. Vincent de Paul décor, no parking except in front, no privacy from the neighbors ten feet away, bottom-line plumbing, tinted, iron-rich water, occasional gas and sulfur fumes coming from who knows where. And you can't keep the happy vacationers out of 'em. A certain dedicated precinct of the American soul there is that'll put up with anything (noise, exotic smells, exotic neighbors, unfriendly pets, high rents—I get eight hundred a week—car traffic, foot traffic,

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unsound construction, yard seepage, you name it) just to *be*, and to be able to *say*, back in Parkersburg and Parma, "It's a three-minute walk to the beach," which every unit *is*, guaranteed.

Another disgruntled precinct—members of our boro population (mostly newcomers)—would love to see these chalets bulldozed, and the ground turned into a passive park or, worst case, an outlet mall. But there's no way. Complicated, runic, fee-simple restrictive covenants that the boro holds (unique to New Jersey) require every postage-stamp householder to agree to sell before the whole acreage can be transferred. Plus, many chalet owners are among Sea-Brite's oldest year-rounders, who came as children (before summers at the shore became a nightmare), never forgot the fun they had, and couldn't wait to own a chalet (or six) and start making their retirement nut off another generation's renters—off the very people they'd once been themselves. (None of these citizens, needless to say, would think to spend two minutes inside any of these sad little domiciles now, which is where I get in the picture.)

These days, I do more than my best to keep things in good order, consistent with costs, including letting the occasional struggling writer in need of quiet space to finish his "Moby-Dick" or some frail soul in retirement from love stay free in return for simple indoor repairs. These people never stay long, owing to the very seclusion they thought they craved. Looked at differently, of course, these chalets would be a perfect place for a homicide.

Clare Suddruth is already standing out front of the fancy beach house that he thinks he might like to buy. Surf Road is a pure, sandy beach road that starts at the ocean end of Cormorant Court and runs south a quarter mile. If the road extended a mile, which it never will, due to the Draconian shoreline laws, it would run right into Ocean Beach Road, where I live.

Clare waits, hands in pockets, in the chill oceanside November breeze. He's dressed in a short, zippered khaki jacket and sturdy khaki trousers that announce his station as a working joe who's made good in a rough 'n' tumble world. The house that Clare's interested in is—in spirit and in residential design concept—not so different from mine and was built during the same development era, the late seventies, before the laws got serious and curtailed beach construction, driving prices into deep space. In my personal view, 61 Surf Road is not a house a man like Clare should ever think of, so of course he is thinking of it—a lesson we Realtors ignore at our peril. No. 61 is a mostly vertical, isosceles-angled, multiwindowed, skylighted, slant-roofed, copper-guttered, graying redwood board-and-batten with older, stained solar panels which has within it not two, not three, but five or six levels, consistent with the builder's concern for "interior diversity" and cheap spatial mystery. More than it's right for Clare, it's perfect for a young sitcom writer with plenty of new scratch,

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there were people whose responsibility was to ensure I was happy

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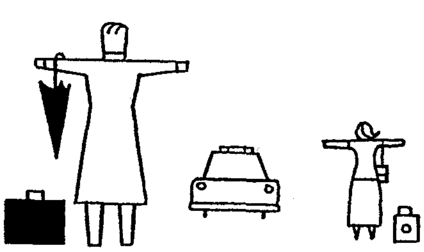
who can “work from home.” Asking is a million-nine.

How the house “presents,” and what the prospective buyer sees, is also typical of the period—two mute, retractable, segmented brown garage doors opening pretty much onto the road, two skimpy windows, and an unlocatable front door, beyond which you go “right up” to a “great” room where the good life purportedly commences. The house actually broadcasts a bland, styleless domiciliary arrogance, which says that this building has no front either because no one’s welcome or else because everything faces the sea, *that’s* the front, and since it’s not your house why’re you interested anyway? Get over it.

Clare Suddruth is a tall, loose-kneed, good-looking man, bristly-haired, big-handed, a sixty-five-year-old ex-G.I.-reen Viet vet with deeply tanned, square-jawed, creased Clint Eastwood features and the seductive murmurous voice of a late-night jazz d.j. In my view, he would be more comfortable in a big solid Dutch Colonial or a rambling late-Georgian vernacular. “Thornton Wilders,” we call these in our business, and we don’t have any in Sea-Brite. Spring Lake’s your ticket for that dream. But Clare’s recent life saga—which of course I’ve heard plenty about—has led him down new paths in search of new destinations. In that way, he is so much like us all.

Clare is waiting beside my Realty-Wise sign (red block letters on a white field: “Realty” above, hyphen “Wise” below, plus the “Tel”—no “www,” no virtual tours, no talking houses, just like I like it, simple, satisfying, reliable, leading buyers toward a feeling of sanity, finality, and ultimate rightness). He turns and faces the house as I drive up, as if to allow that he’s been waiting but time doesn’t mean much to him. He’s driven down in one of his company’s silver Ford panel trucks, which sits in the driveway, “Only Connect Welding” painted in flowing orange script on the side. His schoolteacher wife, Estelle, dreamed it up, Clare says: “Something out of a book, I guess.” But Clare’s no mutton-fisted underachiever who married up. He owns a Silver Star with a gallantry garnish from Nam, retired out a major, went the E-E route at Stevens Tech, in Jersey City. He and Estelle bought a house, had two quick kids. Clare took the upward-tending track with Raytheon but decided that the laddered life was a rat race and took over his dad’s welding business in Troy Hills when the old man retired—with the proviso that he could change the name to something he liked. Clare is what we call a “Senior Boomer,” someone who’s done the course, done it creditably, set aside beaucoup savings, got his kids set up at a safe distance, experienced a conspicuous appreciation in the dollar value of his family home (mortgage paid off), and now wants something a helluva lot nicer before he gets too decrepit to notice it. What these people typically want varies, from a free-standing condo to a weekend home near the water to a “houseboat on the Seine”—a.k.a. something to park at a marina—or else a real, honest-to-God beach house like the one Clare’s now staring up at and about to enter: turn the key, dial up the Jacuzzi. (The owner-sellers, the Doolittles, who’re currently in Boca Grande, put their fingers into the millennial economic breezes earlier this fall and detected a cooling slowdown, and for that reason are ready to shift into municipal bonds and, conceivably, gold.)

Clare’s other characteristic on the buyer’s profile is that three years ago (this, as usual, by his own candid recounting) he fell in love with somebody who wasn’t his wife, who was, in fact, a fresh hire at the welding company—someone named Bitsy or Betsy or Bootsy, I forget. Surprisingly enough, big domestic disruptions followed. The kids chose sides. Several loyal employees actually quit in disgust when “things” came out in the open. Welding damn near ceased. Clare and Estelle were entirely civil (“She was the easy part”). A sad divorce ensued. A marriage to the younger Bitsy, Bootsy, Betsy quickly followed—a life commenced that didn’t feel right from the instant they got to Aruba. One turbulent year passed. The young wife grew restive. (“Just like the goddam *Eagles* song,” Clare said.) She cut off all her hair, threw her nice new clothes away, decided to go back to school, figured out she wanted to become an archeologist and study Mesoamerican something or other. Somehow she discovered that she was brilliant, got herself admitted to the University of Chicago, and left New Jersey with the intention of morphing her and Clare’s odd union into something rare, free-floating, and completely modern.



Only then Estelle discovered that she had multiple sclerosis (she’d moved to her sister’s in Port Jervis), which instantly galvanized Clare into seeing the fog lift, regaining his senses, and divorcing his student wife. (“A big check gets written, but who cares?”) He moved Estelle back down to Parsippany, and began devoting everything and every minute to her and her happiness, convinced that he’d never realized how lucky he was just to know her, and, with time now more precious and fleeting, there was none of it he cared to dick around with. (As unusual as this story seems, believe me—in the real-estate profession—it’s not so.)

Enter, then, Sea-Brite, where Estelle vacationed as a child and always adored it. Nothing now was too good for her. Plus, in Clare’s estimation, our little town was probably a place where the two of them could die before the world fucked it up. I drove him past twenty houses two weeks ago. Some seemed “interesting and possible.” Most didn’t. No. 61, in fact, was the only one that truly caught his fancy, since the inside was already fitted out with a nursing home’s worth of shining disabled apparatus, including (despite all the levels) a mahogany side-stair elevator for when the dark days of disambulation drew near. Clare told me that if he liked it he’d buy it as is and give it to Estelle—who’s currently holding her own, with few symptoms—as a one-year re-wedding present. It makes a pretty story.

“Dry as my Uncle Chester’s bones out here, Frank,” Clare says in his parched but sonorous Clint Eastwood voice, extending a leathery hand. Clare has the odd habit of giving me his left hand to shake. Something about severed tendons from Vietnam causing acute pain, etc., etc. It seems like an affectation and always makes me feel strange about which hand to give him back, but it’s over fast. Then Clare produces his steady, eyes-creased smile that conveys impersonal

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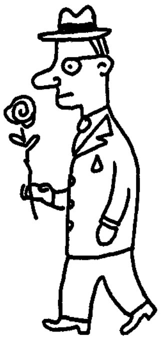
pleasure, crosses his long arms, and turns to look up at 61 Surf Road. I'm just about to say that the worst droughts are the ones where you occasionally get a little rain so that no one really takes them seriously and everyone ends up ignoring the fact that the aquifer's way down and disaster looms. But Clare's thinking only about this house (a good sign). The three-page color listing brochure I'm holding is ready to be proffered before we go in.



Down Surf Road (there are only six similar houses), a bearded young man in yellow rubber coveralls is scrubbing down the sides of a white fibreglass fishing boat on a trailer, using an extended hose brush. A dark-blue "Bush-Cheney" sign stands in his little sandy yard. From back up the road I hear the screech of an electric sabre saw whanging through the filaments of a pine board, followed by the satisfying bops of hammers pounding nails in fast succession. These are my Hondurans. The cold seaside air here has both a fishy and a piney sniff to it. None of this, despite the steely, unpredictable, weather-prone November sky, makes for one bit of bad feeling in me. As I look up to see a squad of pigeons wheeling above and, far beyond, a jet contrail high, high, high, heading out to sea and Europe, I feel well placed here at my post, doing the thing I apparently do best, staying grounded, my duties conferring a pleasant, self-actualizing invisibility—the self as anthropologically perfect *instrument*, like the athlete who is said, if briefly, to "feel it" and become sleekly the task at hand.

"Frank, tell me what this house'll bring in, in the summer?" Clare asks. His mind is clickety-clicking, merits-demerits. I assume he's talking about rent and not a quick flip.

"Three thousand a week," I say.

Clare raises one of his folded arms, furrows his brow, puts his hand to his chin and rests it there. It is the classic gesture of contemplation, familiar to both General MacArthur and Jack Benny, and Clare manages to emanate both their moods at once—grave but also strangely comical. It is clearly Clare's practiced look of public seriousness. My guess now is that we'll never see inside No. 61, never get to appreciate all the disabled add-ons. When clients are motivated, they can't wait to get in the door and start liking everything; whereas standing out in the road, talking about the house as you would if you were going to tear it down, is not a promising sign. Though, of course, I'm often wrong.

"Boy, oh, boy," Clare says, and shakes his head in dismay over modernity. "Three Gs."

"Pays your taxes and then some," I say, a cold breeze waffling my listing brochure and stiffening my digits.

"So who's moving down to Sea-Brite now, Frank?" More standing, more staring.

"Pretty much it's a mix, Clare. People driven out of the Hamptons. And there's some straight-out investment going on. No big springboard sales as yet. Topping wars haven't got down this far. It's pretty much a one-dimensional market still. That'll change, of course, even with rates starting to creep. A five-hundred-thousand-dollar house is already hard to find." I take a glance at my listing sheet, as if all this crucial data were printed there. I'm guessing that this brand of coded chalk talk will appeal to Clare-the-savvy-businessman, and make him think that I'm not really trying to sell him the Doolittles' house but am just here to supply reliable, relevant, factual info and to make the world seem less a sinking miasma. Which is not far wrong.

"I guess they're not making any more oceanfront, are they?"

"If they could, they would, Clare." And I know plenty who'd love to try; the "interests" who want to "reclaim" Barnegat Bay and turn it into another Miracle Mile or a "racino." "Fifty per cent of us already live within fifty miles of the ocean. Ocean County's the St. Petersburg of the East Coast."

"How's *your* business, Frank?" We're both still standing beside the multi-this, multi-that No. 61, like two men tied to posts, awaiting the orderly arrival of a firing squad.

"Good, Clare. Real estate's always good by the ocean. Inventory's my only problem. If I had houses like this every day, I'd be richer than I am."

Clare, at this instant, lets go a small, barely audible (but audible) fart, the sound like a strangled bird call from offstage. It startles me, and immediately makes me stare at its apparent point of origin, the seat of Clare's khakis, as if blue smoke might be visible. It's the ex-marine in Clare that makes such spontaneous emissions completely natural, completely unremarkable (by him), while letting anyone else know how intransigent a man he is and would be—in a love affair, in a business deal, in a divorce, in a war. (Possibly it's my reference to being rich that's forced this disparaging gesture from his insides.)

"Tell me this, now, Frank," Clare says. He's stuffed both hands back in his khaki pockets. He's wearing dark-brown-and-beige two-tone suède leisure sneakers of the sort you buy at shoe outlets or off the sale rack at big-box stores, and that look comfortable as all getout, but that I'd never buy because they're what doozies wear, or else men who don't care if they look like doozies. The Clint Eastwood look has a bit of doozie in it, I see. Old Clint might even wear a pair himself, so uncaring would he be of the world's disapproval. "What kind of climate have we got? I mean, for buying a house?"

I hear the workers up Cormorant Court all begin laughing now, and hammering comes to a halt. "*Hom-bre!*" I hear a voice say. "*Es loco! Flaco y feo!*" One needn't wonder what they're up to—something involving someone's *chile*, no doubt.

"Well, I'd say that's a mixed picture, too, Clare." Clare already knows everything I know, but wants to make me think that he takes what we're doing seriously. *I* take me seriously. So this is just a waste of my time. Clare came into the picture saying that he was ready to buy a house sight unseen, to maximize the quality of life remaining for his dear-stricken-betrayed-but-timeless love. Only, like many humans, when it gets down to the cold nut-cutting, it's do-re-mi his heart breaks over. "Money's cheap down here, Clare," I say. "The mortgage people have got some interesting product enhancements to shift the weight toward the back end—for a price, of course. Like I said, our inventory's way off, which tends to firm up values. Most sales go for asking. You can read that technology's ready to cycle down. Web sites are shutting. The Nasdaq's off. Rates'll probably shoot up after Christmas. You want to know if prices are ready to stabilize, and if you're buying in at the top with no short-term resale potential. But you can't take your cue from the wind, I guess. We had forty-per-cent price increases in two years. I don't like to tell clients to go with their hearts, Clare. To be honest, I don't know much about hearts."

Clare looks over at me, brown eyes narrowed near to closing—I've probably said too much, and may also have strayed over into the too personal, and this sleepy-eyed look is a recognition and a warning. I've found, though, that in business a quick veer into the soft tissue of the personal can confuse things in a good way. Clare, after all, has given me a giant earful. (No doubt he does it to everyone.) Now he's just leery about making an awkward, unwanted "connection" with me. But ditto. I only want his money, for him to have a house, and for us both to feel good about it.

"Can I show you something, Frank?" Clare says. He looks down at his gooberish two-tones, as if they were doing his thinking for him.

"Absolutely."

"It won't take a minute." Clare's already moving—in a bit of a slinking, pelvis-forward sort of way—along the side of the driveway, toward the back of the Doolittles' beach house, between it and the next-door neighbors', a house that's boarded up for the winter and has a dead look about it: basement windows stuffed with pink Styrofoam insulation, sparse rhododendrons covered with miniature wooden A-frames against the coming winter gales, the basement door fitted with plyboard screwed into the frame.

"I took a walk around here while I was waiting," Clare is saying as he goes, but in a softer, more intimate voice, as if he didn't want the wrong people hearing this. I'm following, my listing materials smushed in my windbreaker pocket. The Doolittles' house is, I see, in need of upkeep. The side basement door is weathered and grayed, the veneer cracking at the bottom. A scimitar of glass has dropped out of a daylight basement window and shattered on the concrete footing. Something above us is whapping with a metal noise in the area of the soffits—a loose TV cable or a gutter strap is my guess—though when I look up I can't see anything. The house could definitely do with a new owner and some knowledgeable attention. The Doolittles, who are plastic surgeons, have been spending their discretionary income elsewhere, and may soon have to pay for it.

Clare leads me around to the back of the house, between the windowed, concrete basement wall and the ten-foot, dunelike sand bank that's covered with dry, sparse-sprouted sea rocket from the summer. The dune is what keeps the living room from having a full ocean view, and probably sandbags the sale. Though I've put in the brochure that some "imagination" (i.e., money) dedicated to the living room (i.e., putting it on the third floor) would "open up spectacular vistas."

"O.K., look at this down here," Clare says, almost whispering, bending, hands on knees, to designate by his notice where he means me to look. "See that?" he says gravely.

I move in beside Clare, kneel beside his knee on the sand-and-gravel foundation border, and peer right where, closer now, he's pointing at an outward-curving section of pale-gray concrete, visible beneath the sill and the footing. Here is one of the deeply driven piling piers on which the well-named Doolittles' house is seated and made fast so that at times of climatological upset it's not washed or blown or seismically destabilized and propelled straight out to sea like an ark.

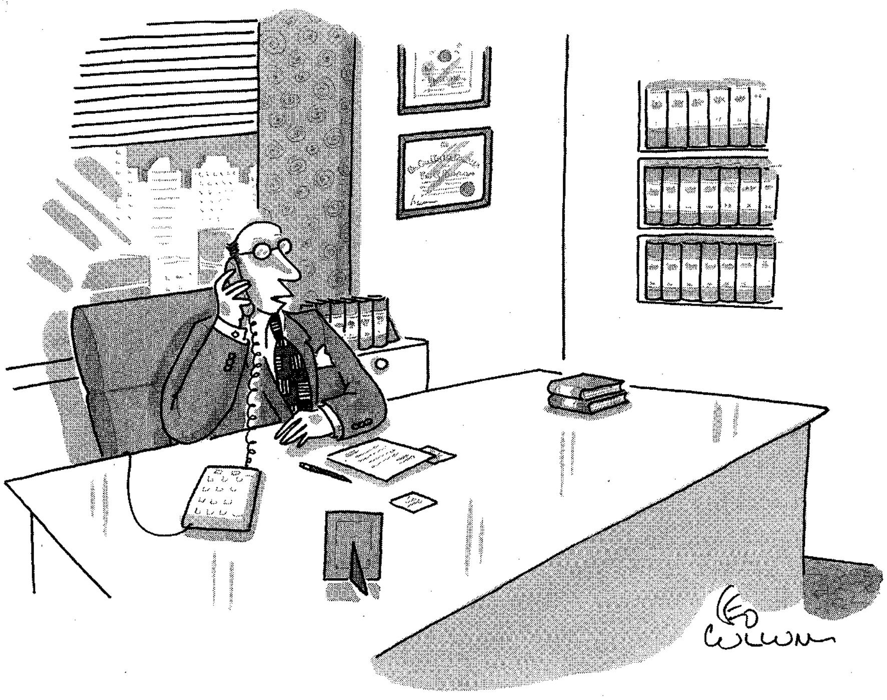
"See that?" Clare says, breathing out a captured breath. He gets down on his knees beside me like a scientist and brings his face down to the curved concrete pillar, putting his index finger to the hard surface.

I see nothing unusual. "What is it?" I say. Though can it be anything good?

"These piers are poured far away from here, Frank," Clare says, conspiratorially. "Sometimes Canada. Sometimes upstate New York. The Binghamton area." He is employing his index finger to scratch at some transparent sealant that's been painted on the pier's exterior but looks just like the regular surface of concrete. "If you pour your forms too early in the spring, or if you pour them when the humidity's extremely high, well, you know what happens." Clare looks over at me—we're very close here—and smiles a closed-mouth gotcha smile.

"What?"

"They crack. They crack right away," Clare says darkly. I see that he has a pale sliver of a scar right along the border of his Brillo-pad hairline. A vicious war wound, possibly, or something discretionary from his second marriage. "And if your manufacturer is not too scrupulous he doesn't notice. And if he's *un*scrupulous he notices and has the silicone sealer painted on and sells it to you anyway. And if your home builder or your general contractor isn't paying attention, or if he's been paid not to pay attention, or if his foreman happens to be Italian, then these piers get installed without anybody saying anything. And when the work gets



"I'm sorry I couldn't be there, but I was able to TiVo your perp walk."

inspected, when this kind of defect ought to show up—and it *is* a serious defect—it might be possible for it not to be noticed, if you get my drift. And then your house gets built, it stands up real well for about fifteen years. But because it's on the ocean the salt and the moisture work on it. And then, suddenly—though it isn't sudden, of course—Hurricane Frank blows up, a high tide comes in, the force of the water turns savage. And—*boom*—Bob's your uncle." Clare turns his head to me, where we're crouched like spelunkers behind the musty, quicklime-smelling Doolittle house, which is built, I see, on much worse than shifting sand. It's built on shitty pilings. "These pilings, Frank. I mean . . ." Clare sniffs a sniff of distaste and homeowner pity, while pressing his thin lips together. "I can see cracks, and this is just four to five inches showing. These people have real problems, unless you can find a sucker who'll buy it sight unseen, or get an inspector who needs a seeing-eye dog."

I can smell Clare's breath in these close quarters we're keeping. It is sweet coffee breath, and makes me realize I'm cold and wishing I were two hundred miles from here.

"It's a problem, O.K.," I say. I'm staring at the innocent-looking little curve of pier surface without, frankly, seeing anything amiss. The thought that Clare is full of shit, or that this is nothing more than a softening-up ploy for a lowball offer, naturally occurs to me, as does the idea that since I can't see the crack I don't *have* to bear the responsibility that attaches to it. A few stalwart ants, I notice, are scuttering around the lime-dusty foundation, no doubt taking in the air before the long subterranean winter's commencement.

"A problem. Definitely," Clare says. "I was raised in a tract house, Frank. I've seen bad workmanship before." He and I both are straggling to our feet.

"What can you do about a problem like that, Clare?" I'm dusting off my knees with my cold hands, stuffing the listing sheet deeper into my pocket, since it clearly won't be needed. I experienced a brief moment of panic when Clare revealed the cracked pier, as if this were my house and it was I who was in deep shit. Only now, a little airy-headed from standing up fast, I register pure exhilaration and a thrumming sense of good fortune and well-being that this is *not* my house, that *my* man was a board-certified U.Va. architect, not some fly-by-night shade-tree spec builder with a clipboard fat with plan-book blueprints, who was in cahoots with the cement trade, the Teamsters, the building inspectors, and City Hall. In other words, a typical New Jersey small businessman. "I'm fine." These words—in a murmur—somehow escape my lips. "I'm just fine."

TRYING TO SLEEP

The girl shepherd on the farm beyond has been
taken from school now she is twelve, and her life is over.
I got my genius brother a summer job in the mills
and he stayed all his life. I lived with a woman four
years who went crazy later, escaped from the hospital,
hitchhiked across America terrified and in the snow
without a coat, and was raped by most men who gave her
a ride. I crank my heart even so and it turns over.
Ranges high in the sun over continents and eruptions
of mortality, through winds and immensities of rain
falling for miles. Until all the world is overcome
by what goes up and up in us, singing and dancing
and throwing down flowers as we continue north taking
the maimed with us, keeping the sad parts carefully.

—*Jack Gilbert*

"Oh, there's things you can do," Clare is saying. "Expensive things." He is for some reason looking closely at me, into my eyes, his fingers pinching up a welt of poplin on my jacket sleeve. "You all right, old boy?" I hear this. Also I hear what sound like youthful boy and girl voices beyond the sand-dune bunker beside us. It all seems to merge from a single source, which is the cold wind. "You look a little green, my friend," Clare's friendly voice says.

I'm having a "subsequent predictable episode." The titanium seeds in my prostate are obviously not as close to dormancy as my Mayo urologist, Dr. Psimos—he of the "I'd Rather Be in Sturgis" T-shirt—irresponsibly predicted. This, of course, is information that Clare doesn't need.

"Stood up too fast," I say, cheeks gone cold and rubbery, my scalp itchy and crawly, my fingers flickering numbly in the air.

"Chemicals," Clare says. "No telling what the hell they spray back here. The same thing's in sarin gas is in D-Con, so I hear."

"I guess," I say, woozy. I'm keeping myself upright now.

"Let's grab some air," Clare says, and roughly, with his bony left fist, begins hauling me up the dune behind us, our shoes sinking in sand, my recovered balance a bit pitched forward, my neck and back breaking a warm sweat. "Maybe you got vertigo," Clare says as he guys me up toward the dune top, his long legs doing the work for two. "Men our age get that. It goes away."

"How old are you?" I say, submissive.

Clare is tugging me forward. "Sixty-five."

"I'm fifty-six." I feel ninety-six.

"Good grief."

"What's the matter?" Sand's in my deck shoes and it feels quite good. His doozie sneakers are probably loaded, too.

"I must look a lot younger than I am."

"I was thinking you did," I say.

"Who knows how old anybody is anymore, Frank?" We're now at the top. The steely-blue, flat-surfaced Atlantic is beyond the wide low-tide beach. A smudge of gray-brown crud hangs just at the horizon. In the middle distance, a boatful of day fishermen is anchored, their short poles abristle off both sides. The small breeze seems to blow straight through my ears and brings a shiver that makes me understand that for late November I'm dressed too lightly. Of course, I believed I'd be inside by now. "I look at twenty-five-year-olds and then somebody tells me they're fifteen," Clare natters on. "I look at thirty-five-year-olds who look fifty. I give up."

"Me, too," I say, feeling slightly replenished, my heart still throbbing from our ascent into the plein air.

Twenty yards in front of us and taking no notice of our appearance like foreign legionnaires topping the rise, a group of teens, eight or nine of them, are involved in a spirited volleyball session. Their single white orb rises slowly upon the whitish sky, while one side shouts, "Mine!" "Set, seeeet-it!" "Bridget-Bridget-Bridget! *Yours! Yours!* Aw-*riiight!*" They're boys and girls of a certain immature teen age: the boys tall and swimmer-lanky and blond; the girls beautiful, tanned, rugged, just back from Hawaii and Ibiza. All are in shorts, sweaters, and sweatshirts, and barefoot. These are the local kids who grew up on the shore but went away to Choate and Milton—who left little Sea-Brite behind as lowly townie-ville but are back now, if briefly, among their old friends (the privileged few), spending the Thanksgiving holidays with vivid dreams of Yale and Dartmouth. Too bad, I think, my kids are not that age again, instead of "grown." Possibly I could do my part better now. Though possibly not.

"You back in working order?" Clare says. He's observing the volleyballers, who pay us no attention. We are the invisibles—like their parents.

"Thanks," I say. "Sorry."

"Vertigo," Clare says again, and gives his large, overly helical ear a good stern grinding with the heel of his hand. He clearly likes being up here on the dune, as anyone would. It's approximately the view one would get from a "reimagined" floor three of the big-but-compromised Doolittle house behind us. Maybe his mind'll change now. Maybe cracked piers aren't so vexatious after all. Things change with new perspective.

"You're from California, you don't count," one girl volleyballer says breezily into the breeze.

"Yeah, I count," a blond boy answers. "I absolutely count. Ro-tate, ro-tate."

"Could you entertain a quasi-philosophical question, Frank?" Clare Suddruth asks. He has squatted now atop the dune and scooped up a handful of sand, as though assaying it, weighing it, sampling its texture.

"Well," I say.

"Pertains to real estate. Don't worry. It's not about my sex life. Or yours. That's not philosophical, is it? That's Greek tragedy."

"Not always," I say, alert to an incoming heart-to-heart that I lack the stomach for.

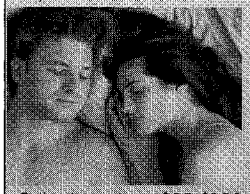
Clare narrows his creased submariner's eyes at the brown horizon murk and spits down into the sand he's just released. "Do you imagine, Frank, that anything could happen in this country to make just normal not be possible again?" He continues facing eastward, as though addressing an analyst sitting in a chair behind him. "I actually tend to think that nothing of a catastrophic nature can really happen. Too many checks and balances. We've all of us manufactured reality so well. Nothing can really change. You know? Drop a bomb, we bounce back. What hurts us makes us stronger. D'you believe that?" Clare lowers his strong chin, then cranks his intense squinting gaze up at me, wanting an answer in kind. His kind. His kind of stagy seriousness. Semper Fi. Iwo. Guadalcanal. Bataan. The Marianas, stretching out to the pulverized but never-say-die Khe Sanh firebase of '68. All the things I somehow missed in my rather easy youth.

"I don't, Clare."

"No. Of course not. Me either," Clare says abruptly. "I *want* to believe it. And *that* scares the shit right out of me. What hurts *me* hurts *me!* And don't you think they're not sitting over there in those other countries that hate us licking their chops at what they see us doing over here, fucking around trying to decide which of these dopes to make President? You think that these people here"—a toss of the Clare Suddruth head toward crumbling 61 Surf Road—"have foundation problems? *We've* got foundation problems. It's not that we can't see the woods for the trees—we can't see the woods *or* the fuckin' trees." Clare expels through his manly schnoz a breath so heavy and poignant a Clydesdale might've breathed it.

"What does it have to do with real estate?"

"That's just where I enter the picture, Frank," Clare says. "It's the circuit my mind runs on. I want to make Estelle's last years happy. I think a house on the ocean's a good thing. Then I start to think about New Jersey being a target for some nut with a bomb or whatever. And, of course, I know death's a pretty simple



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business. I've seen it. I don't fear it. And I know Estelle's probably gonna face it before I do. But I go on looking at houses as if a catastrophe—or death—*can't* really happen, right up until, like now, I have to concede that it *can* happen. And then I'm shocked. Really paralyzed."

"What is it that shocks you, Clare?" I say sympathetically. "You know everything there is to be afraid of. You seem ahead of the game to me."

Clare just shakes his head in grim wonder. "I'm sitting up in bed, Frank—honest to God—up in Parsippany. Estelle's asleep beside me. And what I just go cold thinking about is: if something happens, you know, something bad—a bomb—can I ever sell my fucking house? And, if I buy a new one, then what? Will property values mean anything? I mean, where the hell are we then? Where're we supposed to escape to? It's not death, Frank. Death's pretty much a snap."

"I never thought about that, Clare." Though as a philosophical question, in my view, it's a lot like "Why the solar system?" You sure couldn't make such a worry a contingency in a buy-sell agreement: "Sale contingent on no disaster ever rendering all real property as worthless as tits on a rain barrel." In realty terms, this kind of worry is way beside the point.

"I guess you *wouldn't* think about it," Clare says. "Why would you? I know perfectly well it all has to do with Estelle being sick, and my other relationship ending, plus my age. I just fear the circumstances of my life going to hell. *Boomety-boom.*" Clare is still staring out to sea, above the heads of the lithe and perfect and perfectly untroubled young volleyers—a grizzled old Magellan who doesn't like what he's at long last discovered. *Boomety-boom.*

Clare's problem, of course, isn't a philosophical problem. It just makes him feel better to think it is. His problem with his circumstances is itself circumstantial, the usual occasion for worry: he's made some normal human mistakes, suffered some minor setbacks, taken some shots, and he just doesn't want to fuck up again, or miss an important cue or a warning detail. It's standard; an all too usual form of buyer's remorse—only Clare's experiencing it prior to sale. If he would just take a plunge (always the Realtor's fondest wish for mankind), banish fear, let loose the reins, think that instead of having *suffered* error and loss he's *survived* them and that today is the first day of his new life, then he'd be fine and dandy. In other words, embrace in full the permanent period of life, live not as though he were going to die tomorrow but as though he might live.

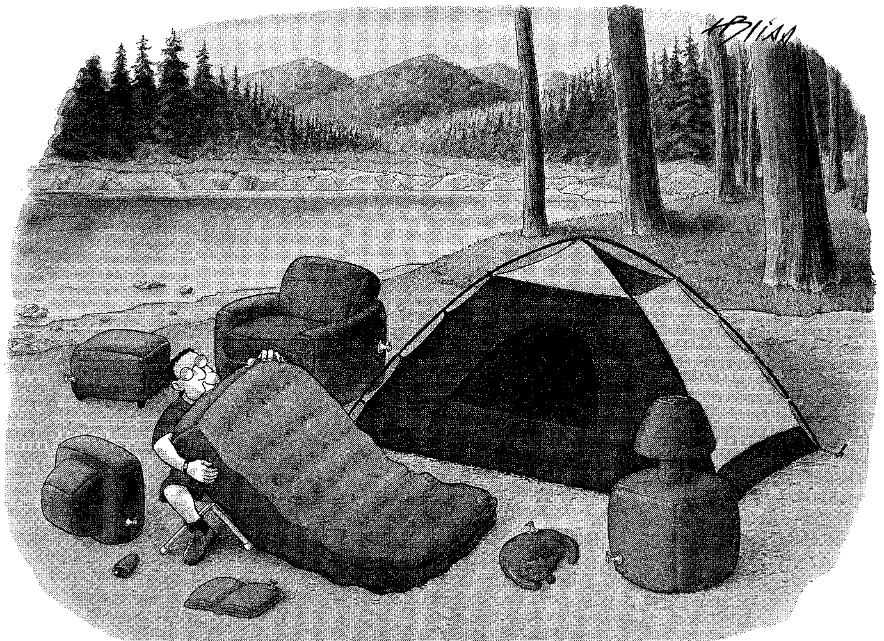
But how to explain this to Clare without arousing the suspicion that I'm just another smarmy, eel-slippery, promise-'em-anything yokel, hyperventilating to unload a house that's crumbling from the ground up? You can't. I can't. Dazzled and enervated as I feel out here at the edge of the continent, I know the Doolittles' house has serious probs, may in fact be heading toward a tear-down situation in a year or two. I'd never sell it to Clare but instead will have to be the reluctant bearer of sombre financial news to the Doolittles down in Boca. Clare will simply have to figure this out for himself. All I can reliably do is show him more houses till he either does or wanders off into the landscape. (I wonder, just now, if Clare's a Blue State or a Red State in the current debacle. Politics is a threshold we don't cross in my business, though I've noticed that most people who look at houses these days are Republicans.)

Somewhere, as if out of the spheres, I hear what sounds very much like the "Marine Corps Hymn" played on an electric xylophone. "Dum-dee-dum-dum-dum-dum-dum-*dee*-dum, dum-dum-dum-dum-dum-dum-doom." It's surprisingly loud, even here on the dune top in the cold salt breeze. The volleyball kids stop rotating and setting and spiking, their heads turned toward us, as if they'd registered something weird yet also weirdly consoling—something from home, or further back in the racial fog. What?

Clare goes fumbling with a little black hand-tooled quick-draw holster under his jacket, attached to his belt like a snub-nosed .38. It is his cell phone issuing a call to arms and valor—unmistakable as only *his* ring in any airport waiting facility or supermarket deli section.

"Clare Suddruth," he says in an unexpected, abrupt command voice—an urgent message from the higher-ups to the troops in the thick of it down here. His snapped answer is aimed into an impossibly tiny (and idiotic) red Nokia exactly like the ones the prep-school girls have in their Tommy Hilfiger beach bags. "Right," Clare snaps, putting his other hand to his ear like Rudy Vallee, lowering his chin in regimental attention. He steps off a few yards along the berm. Every single particle of his bearing announces, "O.K., now, *this* is important." "Yep, yep, yep."

For me, though, it is a freeing moment and welcome, unlike most cell-phone interruptions, when the uninvolved bystander feels like a condemned man, waiting on the trapdoor, all trussed, harnessed, eyes clenched, expecting the drop, while the bearded fat man in a top hat permits himself to be momentarily distracted by the starlings swooping over



the prison yard in an especially lovely formation. (The worst thing, of course, about hearing others yakkety-yak on their cell phones—and the reason I don't own one—is the sullying recognition that everybody's doing, thinking, saying pretty much the same things you are, and none of it's too interesting.)

This moment, though, strands me all out of context, maroons me to a good rejuvenating sensation that I didn't expect to be awaiting me, a relief and a tacit pledge that underneath it all—my moment of syncope, my stillborn house-showing, my physical condition, my underlying condition, my overarching condition—*beneath it all* is still a broad fertile plain I can see across to a white farmhouse and willows and a pond that the sky traffics over, and where the sun is in its soft morning quadrant and there is peace upon the land. Even the prep-school kids seem suddenly excellent, hopeful, and doing exactly what they should be. Two women speed-walkers in woollen long shorts and sweats go herky-jerky businesslike down the strand. I am frankly happy in this lost moment. I wish that Clare could know it, too, since with just a glimpse, permitted by a kind but impersonal life force, many things (if not all) can briefly sit down in these proper, proportionate places, and I (at least) can hear myself breathing to myself, "It's enough. It's enough. It's enough."

"Yep, yep, yep." Clare's still internalizing whatever is to be internalized. Get those fresh troopers up where they can see the back side of that hill and start raining hellfire down on the sorry bastards. And don't be back to me till that whole area's secured and you can give me a full report, complete with casualties. Theirs *and* ours. Got that? Yep, yep. "I'll be home around one, sweetheart. I'll fix lunch." (It is a homelier communiqué than I imagined.)

He punches off his little red Nokia and returns it to its holster without turning around. He is facing north now, up the shore toward Asbury, twenty miles off. His decision to stand away and now stare away gives him the aura of a man composing himself.

"Everything copacetic?" I say, and smile at his back in case he should suddenly turn around and face me. A friendly face is always welcome.

"Yes, sure," Clare says, and does turn, does see my welcoming mug—a mug that says, "We aren't looking at a house anymore, we're just out here together, taking the air." "It was my wife," he says, stepping back toward me. The lady power-walkers are receding into the distance now. The volleyballers have formed a claque beside one net post and are laughing. I hear one of *their* cell phones ringing, a gleeful rilling that says "Yes, yes, *yes!*" "Estelle—well, you know her name." Clare glances toward the calm sea and its white filigree of sudsy surf, where terns are diving toward tiny frightened mackerel. The day fishermen's boat has moved farther south, down the beach. "When I'm gone for very long, it's as if she thinks I'm not coming back." Clare laves his big hands together, scouring off some residue of the call. "Of course, I did go away and didn't come back. So you can't blame her."

"Sounds like it's all different now."

"Oh, yeah." Clare runs his scoured hands back through his steely salt-and-pepper hair. He is a handsome man—even if part doozie, part escape artist, part fearful shrinker from the world's clattering woes. We have much in common, though I'm not as handsome. "What were we gassing about?" he says. The call has erased most of that. A good sign. "I was bending your ear about something." He smiles at me and seems abashed yet happy not to remember. A glimpse of my wide plain with the house, pond, willows, etc., has perhaps briefly been his.

"We were talking about foundations, Clare."

"I thought we were talking about fears and commitments." Clare casts a wistful eye at No. 61—its weathered soffits, its dubious solar panels, its sagging gutter-works.

"Same difference," I say.

"Well," Clare says, "we can let it go by, I guess."

"O.K."

"Somebody else'll want this place."

"Somebody will," I say. "You can bet on that. There aren't many things you can bet on, but on that you can."

"Good deal," Clare says.

We find other things to talk about, other plans, as I walk him back out to his Only Connect truck. Whoever said that a character should possess the incalculability of life wasn't far wrong. In fact, if you ask me, he knew his stuff better than most. ♦

"Even if our political leaders cannot read the pulse of a changing world, the people do."

—Terry Tempest Williams

from "Engagement,"
part three of the author's
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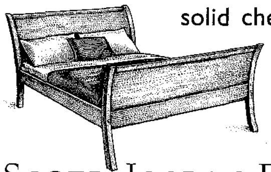

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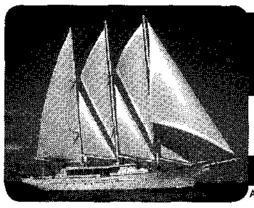

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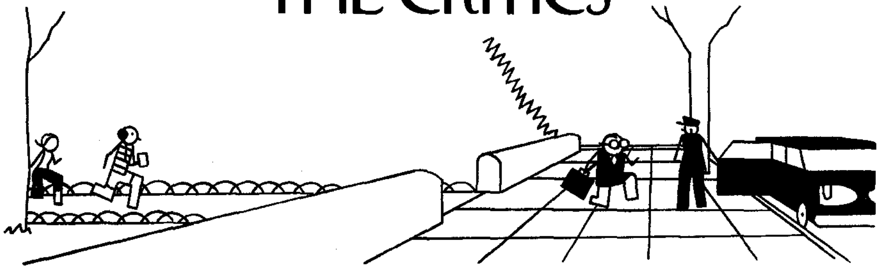


THE SKY LINE

SHANGHAI ON THE HUDSON

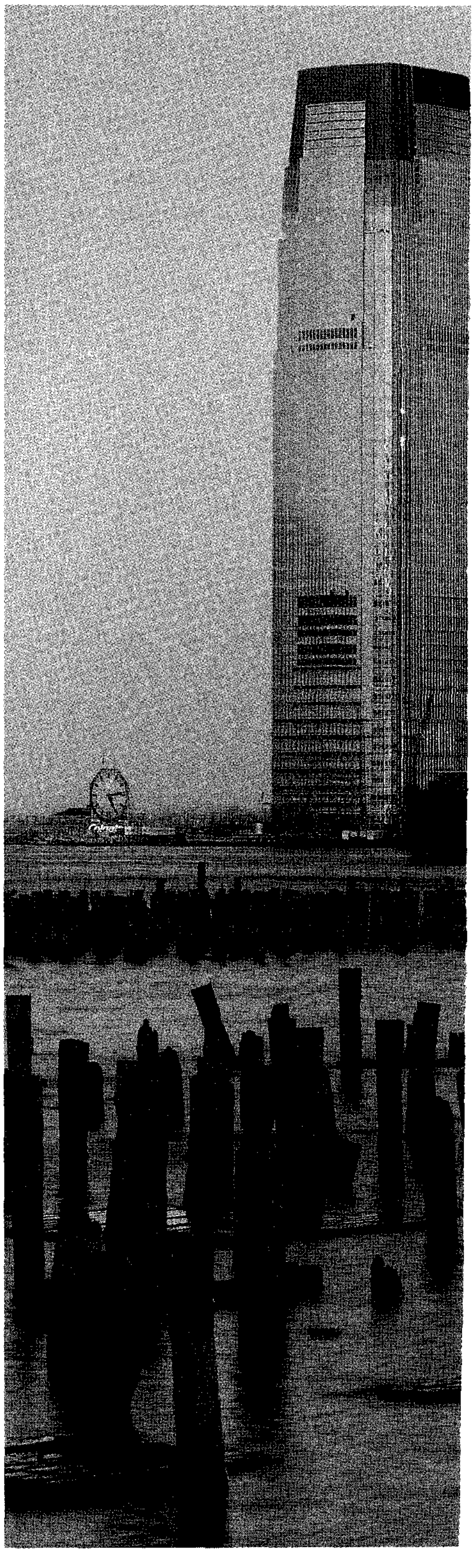
Jersey City wants to be like lower Manhattan, only neat and clean.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

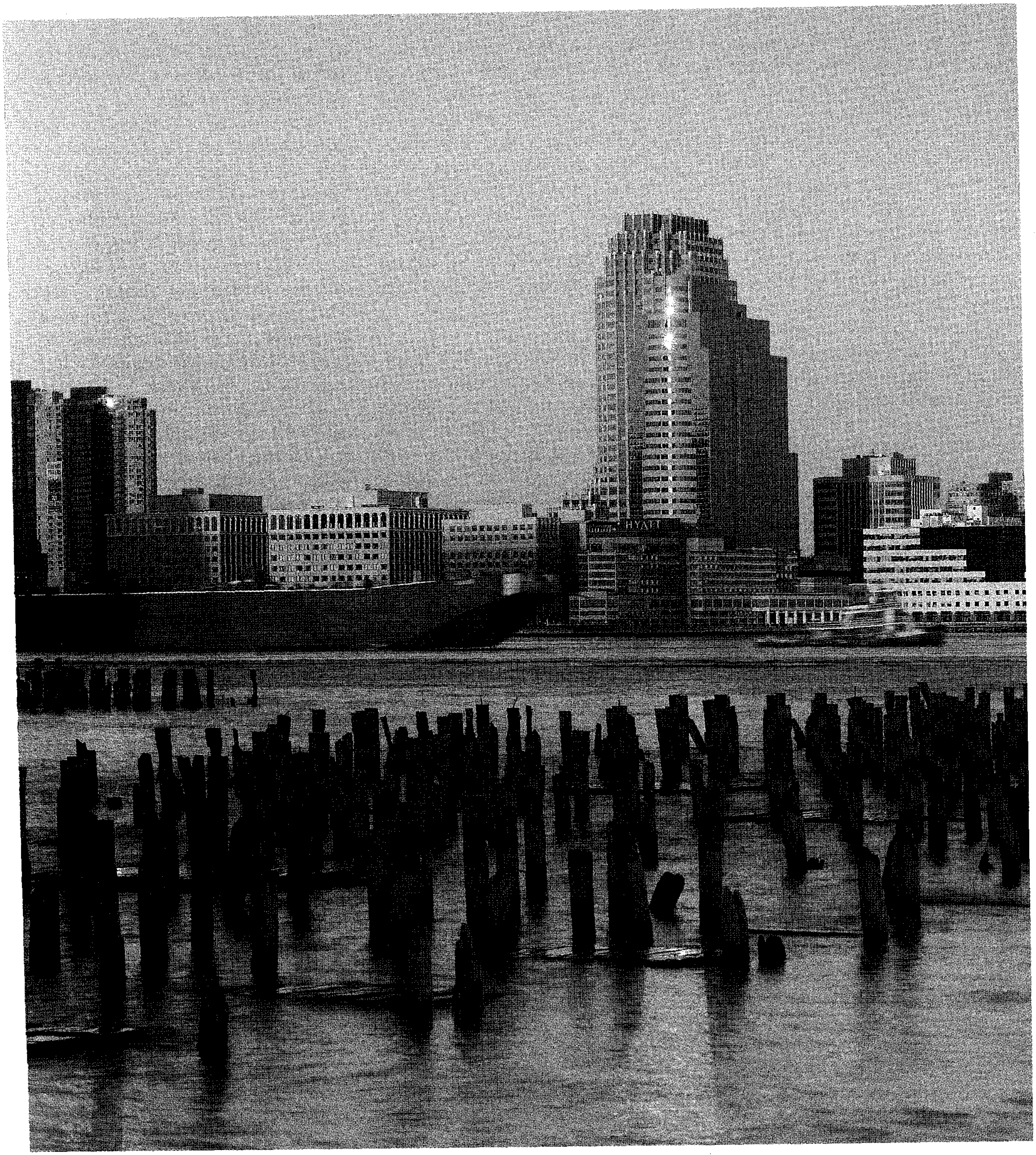
If you stand on Eleventh Avenue in the upper Thirties and look south, the new forty-story Goldman Sachs building in Jersey City, on the other side of the Hudson, appears to be at the end of the street. The intimate connection created by the optical illusion (Manhattan starts angling eastward at about Twenty-third Street) works both ways. If you stand at the corner of Grand and Washington Streets in Jersey City, a couple of blocks from the waterfront, the river has pretty much disappeared, and the Woolworth Building looks as if it were just a short walk away. The Goldman Sachs tower, which was designed by Cesar Pelli, is the tallest skyscraper in New Jersey, and, with its graceful profile and elegant glass façade, the most beautiful. You could also say that it is one of the most important new pieces of architecture in lower Manhattan. To just about everyone except the tax authorities, the Jersey City waterfront is a part of New York. Pelli's tower is the anchor of a new city, a kind of Shanghai on the Hudson, that has sprung up over the past decade on what was once industrial land. It is an enormous complex—by far the largest cluster of skyscrapers in the region outside Manhattan.

Pelli has come closer than most architects to figuring out a way to design a skyscraper that expresses both height and dignity and doesn't seem to be an imitation of the romantic towers of the nineteen-thirties. He started out making buildings, such as the tower above the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan, that were attempts to reinvent the skyscraper as a pattern of glass, and he moved on to buildings, such as the World Financial Center and Carnegie Hall Tower, that leaned too heavily on older skyscraper forms. Now he has transcended both his first modern period and his retro period. Like the tower Pelli just finished for Bloomberg on the upper East Side, the Goldman Sachs building mixes a classic modern look with soft, flowing lines. The building's profile is telescoped, and its corners are cut into a series of small steps, which both reduces the visual impact of the tower's bulk and provides a plethora of corner offices. The façade consists of a pattern of metal lines set over glass, making for a rich, warm texture. The building is the only grace note on the Jersey City skyline.

It took a long time for Jersey City to reach the point where someone would want to put up a building as good as this one. The first developer to realize that you could exploit Jersey City as an extension of Manhattan was Sam LeFrak. In the late nineteen-seventies, LeFrak built Gateway Plaza, a set of concrete towers in Battery Park City that have none of the architectural gentility of the rest of the complex, which was constructed later by other developers under a different master plan. After dropping out of the Battery Park City project, LeFrak joined forces with Melvin Simon, a shopping-center developer who was seeking a partner to build a mall in Jersey City. LeFrak shifted his attention across the river, and in the mid-eighties, on a portion of the Jersey City waterfront he named Newport, he built not only the giant shopping mall that Simon had envisioned but also a cluster of high-rise residential towers and some glass office buildings. It is a dreary assemblage, but it was a big hit. Compared with real estate in Manhattan, the towers were inexpensive to build and inexpensive to rent, and



The Goldman Sachs tower in Jersey City, at



t to the Colgate clock, will be opposite the company's new building in Battery Park City. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

LeFrak could promise tenants all the shopping they wanted, along with spectacular river views, one transit stop away from Wall Street—or just a few steps away from their desks, if they happened to work for the financial firms that had moved their back offices into Newport's commercial buildings.

The Newport towers—among which are two named the Southampton and the East Hampton—were placed behind gated guardhouses around a small central plaza in front of a huge parking garage. Newport is less a city than a suburbanite's idea of what a city might be if all the unpleasant people went away. The buildings float in space, disconnected from one another, and the streets seem designed to ease the movement of traffic rather than the movement of pedestrians. (Not that the traffic moves so well. The routes through the place are confusing, and traffic is often backed up.)

More ambitious developers followed LeFrak, as well as corporations like Goldman Sachs, which looked to Jersey City during the peak of the nineteen-nineties boom, when projections indicated that its workforce would grow to thirty thousand people by the end of the decade, and there seemed to be no place in lower Manhattan to put all of them. The company's headquarters, at 85 Broad Street, had filled up, and employees were spread out in several other buildings downtown. The Jersey City site had room for expansion and spectacular views, and it was handy. It is easier to get to Jersey City from Wall Street than to much of the rest of New York, even though you have to cross a state line, not to mention a vast psychological barrier. Ferries connect it to several different points in Manhattan, and the trip takes about as long as it does to go under the river on a PATH train, and a lot less time than to drive through the Holland Tunnel. The Jersey City waterfront is one of the few parts of the New York City region that are nicer to reach by mass transit than by limousine.

As Jersey City grows, you can sense a yearning to make a real city, even though it looks as if it were being put together by someone who has never been anywhere other than a mall, or perhaps an airport. The Goldman Sachs building, which is on the site of an old Colgate factory at Paulus Hook, at the south end of the Jersey City waterfront, is more than a mile from Newport, at the north end. In between there is a set of office buildings called the Harborside Financial Center; a long, low Hyatt hotel on a pier stretching out into the Hudson; and a few more condominiums. The office buildings encompass all of the architectural clichés of the moment—a bit of neo-traditional cast stone here, a bit of neo-modern steel and glass there. Most of them are mediocre, but no more so than office towers elsewhere. The problem is how little, in the end, they add up to.

In a great or even a good city, the whole is usually more than the sum of its parts. In Jersey City, the parts and the whole are essentially the same thing, an incoherent splatter of buildings. It is not easy to traverse the place on foot, even if you don't mind walking the equivalent of thirty Manhattan blocks, because the streets don't always connect—a lot of the time there aren't any streets. There are parking lots and open spaces and vacant lots and garages, many of which are set on wide streets that aspire to be boulevards but which look more like highways. The intersection of Hudson Street, the first street in from the waterfront, and Exchange Place comes the closest to feeling as though it might be a real city corner, but it lacks energy. The Newport mall sucks up much of the retail activity. There is a riverfront promenade of sorts, but it isn't nearly as well designed or as well landscaped as the one at Battery Park City. Its chief asset, besides the water itself, is the New York skyline.

As the Goldman Sachs building was rising, the company's executives learned that many of their highest-ranking employees thought of Jersey City as Siberia, and a plan to send some of the firm's powerful trading departments to the new building collapsed. This spring, lower-level support departments such as technology and real estate began moving into it, and a lot of the space originally intended for financial executives remained empty. The most significant long-term effect of the building may be that it changed the view Goldman Sachs has of New York. It was thought that the company still needed a new main headquarters building in lower Manhattan, but the old Financial District, which is centered around the Stock Exchange, was abandoned, and plans were made for a new tower in Battery Park City, on the New York side of the Hudson. Goldman's new New York building, which is being designed by the firm of Pei Cobb Freed, is opposite the Jersey City skyscraper. Workers will presumably shuttle back and forth across the river between the two towers. "We call this our Venice strategy," Lloyd Blankfein, the president of Goldman Sachs, said to me.

The pleasantest way to move along the Jersey City waterfront is by climbing onto what is officially called the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System, which is to say a trolley. "Light rail" is an appealing form of mass transit for cities today, since it requires relatively little infrastructure—no subway tunnels or elevated tracks—and it brings in federal subsidies. This one connects the mall, the PATH stations, and Liberty State Park, just to the south. The trolley is uncrowded most of the time, and one suspects that many of the passengers are using it not as a form of mass transit but to reach their cars, which have been parked an inconvenient distance from the pseudo urban center.

Just to the west of the waterfront district, blocks of renovated brownstones have created a small but solidly gentrified quarter not unlike many parts of Brooklyn. But this pleasing, small-scale urbanity has not made its way into the new waterfront area any more successfully than the energy of Manhattan has. The new waterfront has the ambitions of Manhattan, but its real nature seems to lie somewhere much deeper in New Jersey, in its suburban heart.

The waterfront literally has no depth—it extends only a few blocks in from the Hudson—and it has no conceptual depth, either. Since it is also a place where some of the office workers live and shop, it ought to feel more like a real city, but instead we have a place with no center other than a suburban mall and, at least until Goldman Sachs came around, not a single building that could be considered a notable piece of architecture.

Why isn't this place better? What makes Jersey City attractive to tenants—the fact that it is shiny and new and free of the messiness of New York or, for that matter, Newark—is the very thing that condemns it to a kind of terminal banality. Cities are heterogeneous by their very nature. They are built around public places, the most important of which are streets, and they are resistant to too much order. Great cities are eccentric and surprising. The only quirky thing on the whole Jersey City waterfront is the immense octagonal Colgate clock next door to the Goldman Sachs tower. The clock is left over from the days when the site was a factory complex.

Jersey City doesn't measure up in any way to the big-time expansions of great financial districts, places like Canary Wharf in London and La Défense in Paris, which have a kind of bombastic power. The tall buildings of Jersey City emanate an aura of prosperity and vigor when you look at them from the other side of the Hudson, but, when you cross the river and get close, these new skyscrapers seem to offer little but a stark, prim cleanliness. For a lot of people, it seems, that is enough. ◆

BOOKS

THE POLITICIAN

Bill Clinton's "My Life."

BY HENDRIK HERTZBERG

One can make a plausible, if narrow, case that Bill Clinton was one of the most accomplished American politicians of the twentieth century. Among the century's seventeen Presidents, beginning with Theodore Roosevelt, Clinton went the farthest on his own steam, without any of the extrinsic advantages that gave all the others a leg up in one way or another. Unlike fully half of them, Clinton did not inherit the Presidency, either directly, as did T.R., Coolidge, Truman, Johnson, and Ford, or indirectly, as did Taft, Nixon, and George H. W. Bush. Unlike T.R., Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Kennedy, Carter, and Bush, Clinton had no family money and no family connections. Unlike Wilson, Hoover, Eisenhower, and Reagan, he did not achieve national fame in some other field before turning to politics. He got the job by beating an incumbent and then went on to win a second term, a distinction he shares only with Wilson, F.D.R., and Reagan. The well-being of the nation palpably improved during his White House service: unprecedented budget deficits became surpluses; the economy enjoyed its longest boom ever, achieving something close to full employment without inflation; indices of social distress, such as the rates of poverty, crime, and teen pregnancy, dropped precipitously; peace reigned, mostly; and by the time he left both the number of federal employees and the tax burden on the middle class were lower than they had been when he arrived. In spite of (or maybe because of) his impeachment by a party-line vote in the House of Representatives, his end-of-second-term poll ratings were the highest ever measured. Finally, if the choice had been up to the voters, as opposed to the five rightmost Justices of the Supreme Court, Clinton would have become the century's third President, after T.R. and Reagan, to flex the ultimate political muscle: turning the Oval Office over to a handpicked (and less charismatic) successor.

The case is, I admit, a trifle, er, Clintonian. (It all depends on the meaning of "accomplished." And "politician.") The negative side of the ledger, God knows, is not exactly blank. Clinton never captured a majority of the popular vote; in 1992 his percentage was smaller than Michael Dukakis's four years earlier, and he might not have won at all if not for the gonzo candidacy of H. Ross Perot. Denied the traditional honeymoon, he allowed himself to be ambushed by the gays-in-the-military fiasco, which seized headlines for months, weakened him politically, and left its intended beneficiaries worse off than before. What, in "My Life" (Knopf; $35), he calls "Whitewater World" was a fraud and a hoax—the true scandal was the right-wing conspiracy, which was real, vast, and breathtakingly mendacious—but it was Clinton's White House that both spurned the Washington *Post's* request for the (ultimately innocuous) Whitewater documents and formally asked for the appointment of an (ultimately partisan) "independent counsel." ("It was the worst presidential decision I ever made," he writes, "wrong on the facts, wrong on the law, wrong on the politics, wrong for the presidency and the Constitution.") His impeachment was a travesty, for which his political enemies should be spared no blame; but he was their enabler, to say the least. His efforts to combat terrorism exceeded those of his successor, pre-9/11, but they were manifestly not enough.

Political imperatives help make the book heavy going.

TOM BACHTELL

I don't know of any historical heavy thinkers who would place Clinton among the century's greatest Presidents, although some might argue that faced with Rooseveltian challenges, and gifted with a Rooseveltian Congress, he could have reached Rooseveltian heights (especially if he had benefitted from Rooseveltian levels of personal privacy). Strictly as a raw political talent, playing the hand that life and history dealt him, he has had few equals.

Clinton never wanted to star in a movie, command a submarine, or run a business. From the moment in adolescence when he realized that his saxophone playing was not about to make him the next John Coltrane or Stan Getz, all he wanted to do was run for office, which he started doing at sixteen, getting himself elected "senator" at Arkansas's American Legion Boys State summer camp. (His reward was a week in Washington, where he famously received the laying on of hands from President Kennedy in the Rose Garden.) He chose to go to college at Georgetown University because Georgetown University is in Washington. He took a law degree because in the United States law is the default mode for professional seekers of elective office. He spent summers apprenticing in campaigns. He was elected attorney general of Arkansas at thirty, governor at thirty-two, and President of the United States at forty-six, the third-youngest man ever to win the White House. All in all, he ran for office nine times between the ages of twenty-seven and fifty, an average of one campaign every two and a half years. He's still only fifty-seven—younger than George W. Bush, younger than John Kerry, younger than three-quarters of Bush's Cabinet and three-fifths of Kerry's senatorial colleagues. He is already a kind of folkloric character, the larger-than-life protagonist of a great American tall tale. Bill Clinton is to politics what Paul Bunyan was to lumberjacking, and "My Life" is his big blue ox—very big. And very bovine.

How big is "My Life"? It weighs in at three pounds, five ounces. According to Knopf, 2.6 million copies are in print, which puts the over-all tonnage, so far, at four thousand three hundred—the equivalent, in sheer mass, of a ten-mile-long motorcade of Lincoln Town Cars. "I was a fat band boy who didn't wear cool jeans," Clinton writes of his junior-high-school self. His jeans are cooler now, and at one of his White House going-away parties his staff gave him a modified Presidential seal emblazoned ROCK 'N ROLL PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. He's been looking trim lately, but he still hasn't licked that weight problem—he's just put it between hard covers.

The text of "My Life" occupies nine hundred and fifty-seven pages. Acknowledgments and an index occupy another xlii, or forty-two, bringing the total to nine hundred and ninety-nine. Can this be an accident? I don't think so. It is widely believed in the publishing industry that a book that goes over a thousand pages cuts its sales potential in half. One may speculate that Knopf deployed every tool in its kit—not just editing but also kerning and widow-pruning and messing about with margins and type sizes and optical squeezes—to bring this baby in under the magic number.

The thousand-page factor is one manifestation of the nonliterary considerations that have gone into the shaping of this book. These considerations are of two types: industrial and political. The financial stakes are high. Three years ago, when the Knopf-Clinton deal was first announced, Clinton's advance was reported to have been around twelve million dollars; promotional, production, and other ancillary expenses will have added many millions more. These are Hollywood numbers, and they impose certain imperatives.

Clinton is said to have chosen Knopf and the editor Robert Gottlieb because he was so impressed with Katharine Graham's "Personal History," which was indeed a marvellous piece of work. But Mrs. Graham's memoir, which not only won a Pulitzer Prize but deserved it, was not written for money. She did not require a large advance in order to buy a house and pay off big legal bills. She owned a Fortune 500 company. "Personal History" was six years in the making. Mrs. Graham took her own sweet time. Clinton couldn't afford to take his. "My Life" had to arrive within certain temporal parameters. It couldn't come out too soon, lest it interfere with the family's other autobiographical enterprise, Hillary Rodham Clinton's "Living History," which appeared in June of 2003, sold 1.5 million copies in hardcover, and now rests comfortably on the paperback best-seller lists. It couldn't come out too late, lest it forgo the octane of a political year; and within that political year it had to appear early enough so as not to step on, and be stepped on by, the party Conventions and the general-election campaign. The ideal moment would have been just before Father's Day. Clinton, habitually late, finishing the manuscript in a rush of all-nighters, missed that particular selling opportunity. Nevertheless, the book landed in the stores more or less on schedule. In his acknowledgments, Clinton thanks Gottlieb, without whose ministrations, he writes, "this book might have been twice as long and half as good." (If that is true, then that pile of paper must have been a terrifying sight before Gottlieb got hold of it.) By the same token, though, the book might have been three times as good and a third as long if it had been written half as fast.

Political imperatives, and plain old political habits, have also done their share to make "My Life" heavy going. Much of the book is like an elephantine version of one of the interminable town meetings Clinton held in the days before the 1992 New Hampshire primary, when he was clawing his way back from the Gennifer Flowers and draft imbroglios. His strategy was to answer every question, explain every policy proposal, listen to every hard-luck story, shake every hand, and look deep into every pair of eyes in the room, quitting only when, whimpering piteously for surcease, "the last dog dies."

That is still his strategy. An enormous slice of "My Life" is given over to what stump speakers call shout-outs and what hostesses call bread-and-butter notes. There are more names here than in a cathedralful of church newsletters. The book teems with people who are brought briefly onstage, introduced, praised as being "smart and funny" or "brilliant" or "terrific" or "sharp as a tack," thanked, and ushered back into the wings, never to be encountered again. This is literature as retail politics. And there are Saharan stretches that read like a child's epic letter from camp: First I did this. Then I did that. Then I did something else.

In myriad other ways, the book is shaped by political pressures and obligations. Theoretically, when a President becomes an ex-President he is freed from many of the constraints that necessarily shackled him when he was seeking office or negotiating with Congress or conducting diplomacy. But Presidential memoirs seldom take full advantage of the freedom to be frank, and Clinton's is no exception. It is his unique and ironic fate to have a spouse who is a politician, too—one whose elective career lifted off with a roar just as his own was nearing splashdown. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, Democrat of New York, represents a state bristling with political minefields, and she will almost certainly be on every list of Presidential possibilities for several cycles to come. Her husband must therefore consider the impact on her political fortunes of everything he says, does, or writes. He might like to fire off something beastly about Israel, for example, or the Cubans in Miami, or the teachers' unions. But he can't. He has to watch what he says. If this is Hillary's revenge, it is exquisite.

On the other hand, there's not much evidence that Clinton wants to say anything beastly about anybody. He likes people to like him. More to the point, perhaps, he likes to like people. His emotional voraciousness goes both ways; it isn't all take. In "My Life" he is forever mentioning how much he likes this county chairman or that Republican senator or whatever foreign leader he has just conferred with. His dislikes, if any, are harder to discern. He is angry at the press for its lazy exploitation of the series of fake scandals—from the haircut-on-the-tarmac to the Vincent Foster "murder"—that greased the skids for the Monica Lewinsky perjury trap, and he is supremely angry at Kenneth Starr, the Javert-as-Elmer Fudd prosecutor and Whitewater World wabbit wrangler. But these angers have a generic, impersonal feel. He writes of his legitimate political opponents—Bush senior, Newt Gingrich, Bob Dole—not only without rancor but with respect and something like affection.

Even a character like "Justice Jim" Johnson, who figured in the first grown-up political campaign that Clinton played a part in, gets his human due. In the summer of 1966, after his sophomore year at Georgetown, Clinton campaigned for one Frank Holt, who was running for governor of Arkansas to succeed the notorious Orval Faubus. Holt, he writes, "had the support of most of the courthouse crowd and the big financial interests, but he was more progressive on race than Faubus, and completely honest and decent. Frank Holt was admired by just about everybody who knew him (except those who thought he was too easygoing to make any real change)." Holt's main opponent was Justice Jim, a racist demagogue. Clinton's take on Johnson's appeal is worth lingering over, both as a glimpse of the political world the future President emerged from and as a sample of his own eyes and mind at work. Johnson, Clinton writes,

> thought Faubus was too soft on civil rights; after all, he had appointed a few blacks to state boards and commissions. With Faubus, who had genuine populist impulses, racism was a political imperative. He preferred improving schools and nursing homes, building roads, and reforming the state mental hospital to race-baiting. It was just the price of staying in office. With Johnson, racism was theology. He thrived on hate. . . . And he was a savvy politician who knew where his voters were. Instead of going to the endless campaign rallies where the other candidates spoke, he traveled all over the state on his own, with a country-and-western band, which he used to pull in a crowd. Then he would whip them into a frenzy with tirades against blacks and their traitorous white sympathizers.
>
> I didn't see it at the time, but he was building strength among people the other candidates couldn't reach: people upset with federal activism in civil rights, scared by the Watts riots and other racial disturbances, convinced the War on Poverty was socialist welfare for blacks, and frustrated with their own economic conditions. Psychologically, we're all a complex mixture of hopes and fears. Each day we wake up with the scales tipping a bit one way or the other. If they go too far toward hopefulness, we can become naïve and unrealistic. If the scales tilt too far the other way, we can get consumed by paranoia and hatred. In the South, the dark side of the scales has always been the bigger problem. In 1966, Jim Johnson was just the man to tip them in that direction.

Johnson beat Clinton's candidate in the primary and then, to Clinton's relief, lost to Winthrop Rockefeller, a moderate Republican, in the general election. Twenty-five years later, Justice Jim turns up again as a peddler of anti-Clinton dirt. "When I ran for President," Clinton writes, "he planted ingenious stories, directly and indirectly, with anyone gullible enough to believe them, and got some surprising takers among the so-called eastern liberal media he loved to revile, especially for Whitewater tales. He's a canny old rascal. He must have had a great time conning them, and if the Republicans in Washington had succeeded in running me out of town, he'd have had a good claim to the last laugh." Clinton sees Justice Jim quite clearly for the lowlife he is, but he brings a touch of sympathetic warmth to the picture ("He's a canny old rascal"). Clinton is simply not a hater.

It's an almost voluptuous pleasure to read Clinton when he's recounting and analyzing a political race or a legislative battle, whether it's one of his own or somebody else's (and he's as astute on why he got beat for president of the Georgetown student council as on how he turned the Gingrich Republicans' post-1994 triumphalism against them). Passages like these, and there are plenty of them, are enriched by a characteristic mixture of shrewdness, empathy, earthiness, and a nuanced appreciation of context. The problem is that the book is not a sculpture garden. It's a quarry. It's a strip mine. There's gold in that thar hill, but it's veined among layers of rocky sediment, and you have to bring your own pickaxe.

A fine four-hundred-page book is buried somewhere under the avalanche that is "My Life." Better still, perhaps someday someone will carve out of it a Little Clinton Library of four or five concise volumes, suitable for carrying in the back pocket of a pair of cool jeans. The

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THE CURIOUSLY STRONG MINTS

one that's closest to being ready to lift straight out of "My Life" is the story of his family and his childhood. It's a tale tinged with sepia, at once melancholy and idyllic. The family's closet was stacked with skeletons. Bill Clinton's father's name was William Blythe, as, technically, was his own till he had it legally changed, at sixteen. Blythe senior died at twenty-eight, in a car crash, three months before young Bill was born; not until he was forty-six and already President did Bill Clinton learn, via a Washington *Post* investigative story, that his father had "probably" been married three times before meeting his mother, and that he had a half brother and a half sister of whose existence he had no clue. At four, Bill acquired a "handsome, hell-raising, twice-divorced" stepfather, Roger Clinton, whose self-doubt and binge drinking "kept him from becoming the man he might have been." The incident when the teen-aged Bill angrily faced down his drunken stepfather and stopped him from beating his mother is well known; less so is a trauma years earlier, when little Bill, a kindergartner, saw Roger pull out a pistol and fire at his mother before being taken off to jail for the night. There is more along these lines. But his relationship with his salty, fun-loving mother, Virginia Kelley, was always close and tender, and his fractured family was the nucleus of a huge, overlapping set of variegated clans that, as he writes with clear-eyed practicality, "gave me kinfolk in fifteen of Arkansas' seventy-five counties, an enormous asset when I started my political career in a time when personal contacts counted more than credentials or positions on the issues."

Volume II of the Little Clinton Library might be a Dreiserian bildungsroman, the story of an eager provincial lad whose world opens out through college in Washington and a term-time job with his fellow-Arkansan J. William Fulbright, the distinguished and dissenting chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; who discovers Europe, Western and Eastern, on a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford; and who struggles through to a kind of truce with his conscience in dealing with the great character test of his generation, the draft and the Vietnam War. A diary he kept during this period helps him trace the tumult of his feelings with unusual clarity and specificity. In that character test, Clinton neither excelled (as did, for example, John Kerry, who fought heroically in the war despite doubts about and finally full-throated opposition to it) nor flunked (as did, for example, Dick Cheney, who both supported the war and single-mindedly avoided getting anywhere near it). Clinton simply passed. You might say that he graduated, but *sine laude*. His angst-ridden thrashings are easily ridiculed, but he confronted his dilemma, obsessed over the moral implications of each of his fitful decisions, faced the personal and public issues before him with the utmost seriousness, and redeemed himself, in part, by participating in the responsible, moderate wing of the antiwar movement more actively than all but a few thousand of his contemporaries. The coda of this volume would take him through law school and his Tracy-and-Hepburn courtship of Hillary.

The Little Clinton Library volumes on Clinton's Arkansas ascent, which over eighteen years took him from a losing congressional race to five terms in statewide office to the Presidency, and on his eight years in the White House would have an overarching theme: the challenge of liberal governance in an era of harsh conservative mobilization and chronic legislative deadlock. The lessons that Clinton took from his reëlection defeat after his first two-year term as governor of Arkansas were both personal and political. The former, he writes, was summed up by a friend who told him, "Bill, the people thought you were an asshole!"—an admonition that I suspect is a first for Presidential memoirs. The latter he sums up himself:

> If I hadn't been defeated, I probably never would have become President. It was a near-death experience, but an invaluable one, forcing me to be more sensitive to the political problems inherent in progressive politics: the system can absorb only so much change at once; no one can beat all the entrenched interests at the same time; and if people think you've stopped listening, you're sunk.

The right hated Clinton because it thought he was deceitfully disguising a high-tax, nanny-state, libertine liberal agenda in the language of mainstream moderation. On the left, which fully warmed to him only when he got caught with his pants down, the rap on him was that he didn't stand for anything—that he was a trimmer, a sellout artist, a slick self-seeker. One can find evidence for either proposition in "My Life," if that's what one is looking for. The simpler explanation is that his purpose was roughly what he thought it was, to use himself as an instrument to effect change in a roughly consistent direction—toward a fairer, more egalitarian, more tolerant society, an economy in which the harsher effects of efficient markets are cushioned by social programs designed to equalize opportunity and encourage self-sufficiency, and a world in which peace is underwritten by political democracy and, especially, economic integration.

To be a political instrument—to be in politics—one has to politically survive. Clinton did what was necessary. Perhaps the most notorious of all Clinton quotes—after "Briefs," "I didn't inhale," "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky," and "It depends on what the meaning of 'is' is"—comes from his 1969 letter to a reserve colonel: "I decided to accept the draft in spite of my beliefs for one reason: to maintain my political viability within the system." If one can see nothing but cynicism in this statement, one will be blind to the core of honor, a little tarnished but real, that I, for one, discern in Bill Clinton. Politics, democratic politics at any rate, is compromise, and sometimes the compromises are internal, and compromises of that kind can seem especially corrosive. Does Clinton, in his heart of hearts, truly favor capital punishment, which has always been his public position? I don't know. But I doubt it. In "My Life" he says almost nothing about the subject, even though he presided over Arkansas's first executions in a decade. The name of Ricky Ray appears in the book, in connection with the passage of an anti-AIDS measure called the Ricky Ray Hemophilia Fund, but the name of Ricky Ray Rector, the mentally damaged convict who was executed in Grady, Arkansas, three and a half weeks before the 1992 New Hampshire primary, does not. In Arkansas when Clinton was coming up, one could be against the death penalty or one could have a political career, but one could not do both. Clinton's silence on the matter is evidence either of shame or of a chilling ability to compartmentalize.

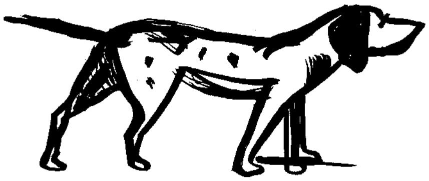
Clinton's Presidency divides into two periods—not pre- and post-Monica but pre- and post-health care. The left tends to forget that the emphasis of Clinton's first year and a half in office was on completing the unfinished work of the New Deal, the Fair Deal, and the Great Society by enacting universal health insurance. The enormous publicity, advertising, and lobbying campaign against the Administration's health plan succeeded in persuading much of the press and the public that the proposal's failure was all the fault of the Clintons: the plan was too complicated, it had been prepared in too much secrecy, it was too Hillaryish, and so on. None of this was true, any more than it was true that (as some critics charged) the plan would have taken away people's choice of a family doctor or put people in jail for buying supplementary insurance. The Clintons made their share of mistakes, but they didn't make more than their share. Clinton admits that he made an error in his 1994 State of the Union address when he promised to veto any health bill that did not cover all of the uninsured. But, he adds, "as it turned out, my error didn't matter, because Bob Dole would decide to kill any health-care reform." Health care was doomed the moment that the Republicans—accepting the argument of William Kristol that the passage of any plan, however watered-down, would represent an unacceptable political victory for the Democrats—resolved to use the filibuster. The Clintons' mistakes were beside the point.

The health-care stonewall, however cruel as public policy, was a political masterstroke; it led directly to the Republicans' capture of the House of Representatives in the 1994 election. From then until the end of his second term Clinton was fighting a political guerrilla war. A working politician has to deal with the world as it is, not as he would like it to be. From start to finish, from the Arkansas of Orval Faubus and Justice Jim Johnson to the Washington of the conservative ascendancy, Clinton has had to operate in a hostile environment. His compromises, his maneuvers, his triangulations, his feints and parries were the tactics he used, in the waning years of his Presidency, to fight the Republicans to a standstill. Thanks to a private indiscipline that remains inexplicable to his admirers—and, judging from "My Life," to himself as well—he ended up fighting with one hand tied behind him. But fight he did. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

America the Vulnerable, *by Stephen Flynn (HarperCollins; $25.95).* In a year, roughly a hundred and twenty million cars, eleven million trucks, and eight million shipping containers cross America's borders. According to Flynn, a former Coast Guard commander now at the Council on Foreign Relations, all of them are potential terrorist weapons. Flynn argues that too little has been done since September 11th to safeguard the country's transportation infrastructure and, to prove the point, he charts the journey of a hypothetical Al Qaeda operative who smuggles fissile material from Ukraine into the United States. Because encasing the country in fortifications and checkpoints is unfeasible, Flynn believes that policymakers must draw lessons from the world of corporate safety—a job that requires government and private-sector coöperation. Meanwhile, Americans must learn to regard acts of terrorism as they do acts of God: unavoidable features of everyday life.

Hatchet Jobs, *by Dale Peck (New Press; $23.95).* Peck has pledged not to write any more vicious reviews of the sort that have recently earned him notoriety. On the evidence of this collection, this is not a cause for regret. The earlier pieces here—assessments of novels by Kurt Vonnegut, Michael Cunningham, and David Foster Wallace—tend to be stronger; in later ones, the attacks feel like a shtick, an impression enhanced by the front-cover photograph, of the author holding an axe. The merits of Peck's reviewing style—passion, wit, and contrarian zeal—are usually outweighed by its defects: endless, baffling plot synopses, a questionable grasp of literary history, and a tendency to use authors' weaker books to damn their entire outputs. Worryingly, when Peck quotes paragraphs of other writers' work to show how bad they are, the prose is often more absorbing than his own.



Osprey Island, *by Thisbe Nissen (Knopf; $24).* Run-down resorts on sparsely populated islands are seldom settings for cheerful tales, and, sure enough, "It was not a good season for the Lodge at Osprey Island." The owners still mourn the death of their son in Vietnam; their wayward daughter has come home, lured by the promise of free board and babysitting for her young daughter, but resenting every moment she spends there; and the caretakers, a couple perpetually too drunk and wretched to perform even the most basic of their duties, are equally unable to raise their precocious eight-year-old son. When one of the caretakers passes out in the laundry room, cigarette in hand, and dies in the ensuing fire, a fight over who can best look after the boy brings the small community's few remaining secrets into the open, with predictably miserable consequences for all. Nissen's characters are not quite clichés, but they always act according to their well-defined types, leaving us saddened but never surprised.

Street Logos, *by Tristan Manco (Thames & Hudson; $19.95).* Over the past decade, many graffiti artists have moved away from painting their signatures in the familiar wide-style lettering (a practice known as "tagging"). Instead, they leave—and make—their mark with pictograms that become personal trademarks. Thus, a Belgian artist known as Plug appends large, cartoon electric plugs to machines in public places, while Cha, an academy-trained painter, adorns the walls of Barcelona with Picasso-influenced cats. Manco's colorful survey of this D.I.Y. subculture spotlights some seventy artists working in the service of an impulse that is variously subversive, ironic, pop, celebratory, and dogmatic. In this medium, recognition is everything, and Manco's subjects are heavily influenced by the use of logos in advertising; the London artist Banksy terms his work "Brandalism." Exuberantly inventive, they enjoy responding to, and even altering, each other's work, to form what the New York-based artist Swoon calls a "community of actions."

DANCING

LIFE STEPS

The Frederick Ashton centennial.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

The two giants of twentieth-century ballet, Frederick Ashton and George Balanchine, were both born in 1904. And so, early this month, we were no sooner getting over New York City Ballet's Balanchine centennial than the Lincoln Center Festival brought us a two-week Ashton Celebration, with four companies—England's Royal Ballet, the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the K-Ballet of Tokyo, and the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago—performing eleven ballets, plus assorted pas de deux. One would like to be judicious about these shows, and say who danced better than who, and so forth. But Ashton, after his death in 1988, tended to drop out of repertory—a situation that is only now reversing. Therefore, one was just so happy to see his rich, deep ballets again, night after night, that it was hard to get into a judging mood. Even bad things looked good.

In a sense, Ashton's work is the apotheosis of the normal. To start with, most of his ballets are story ballets, pieces that show us our lives and tell us that we can understand them. Often, the subject is a family or a group of friends—people who have a shared world and work to protect it. At the end of "Cinderella," the piece that capped the Lincoln Center series, Cinderella's wicked stepsisters aren't just sent packing. They apologize; they're sorry they were mean. Cinderella kisses them and forgives them. A note of charity pervades many Ashton ballets, as does charity's frequent partner melancholy. To that combination add wit—Ashton was the funniest choreographer who ever lived—and restraint, and you have a fine bouquet of English traits, above all, the traits of the English novel, from Jane Austen down through Penelope Fitzgerald. Like those writers, Ashton used this equipment to unearth feelings that we barely knew we had but which, once he showed them to us, we realized we'd been living on our whole lives.

A perfect example is "Enigma Variations," set to a score by Edward Elgar—a suite of musical portraits of himself and his wife and his friends. Ashton follows Elgar's plan. He shows us the composer at his house in Worcestershire in 1898, around the time the score was written. He shows us the friends—rather more of them, actually, than we need in a one-act ballet, and including a number of central-casting English eccentrics running around in tweeds and brandishing ear trumpets. But the center of the piece is Elgar, and Ashton has fleshed out his portrait.

The composer is seen in a dark time. He feels ignored by the public. He doubts his gifts, and amid the bustle in his household he stands alone, pensive. Near the middle of the ballet his solitude is spotlighted in an unforgettable dance called the "Nimrod Variation," where he takes a walk with his friend and publisher, A. J. Jaeger. Elgar said that the music for this variation was a memory of a "summer evening's talk about Beethoven" between the two men. In a ballet you can't talk, so what Ashton's two dancers do is mostly walk, interspersing their paces with slow, plangent gestures. They turn outward from each other, then back inward. They do ronds de jambe par terre, in which the foot traces a circle on the floor. This, I suppose, is their ratiocination, the discussion of Beethoven that—these being men, and Victorian men—both disguises and contains their feelings for each other. Soon they are joined by Elgar's wife, and the men pass her back and forth between them, in low lifts. She becomes the stand-in for Beethoven, the medium through which the two friends speak to each other. The dance is very austere, particularly compared with the welling music that accompanies it, and it ends as modestly as it began, with the three dancers simply lifting their arms to Heaven, as if asking a question. The subject is sympathy, meaning not just fellow feeling but the separateness we have to bridge—and that we never bridge except partially—to get into the mind of another person, however loved. No other ballet choreographer has examined normal emotions with such sophistication.

The subtlety of "Enigma Variations" is all the more impressive in that the ballet was autobiographical. When it was made, in 1968, Ashton was the director of the Royal Ballet, but shortly beforehand he had been informed that in 1970 he would be replaced. In fact, his contract ran only to 1970 (and he had always said he would leave at that time), but he had hoped to be asked to stay on. Instead, he was told that his successor—Kenneth MacMillan, a man whom the administration regarded as more up-to-date—had already been hired. So he had reason to be thinking about disappointments in the lives of artists. He rescued his protagonist: at the end of "Enigma Variations" a telegram arrives, saying that a famous conductor has agreed to conduct the première of Elgar's newest composition. Ashton himself had no such happy surprise. Though "Enigma Variations" was not his last major work, it came near the end of his prime, and he seems to have known that this would be the case. The ballet is set in autumn. Leaves fall.

Many of the pieces included in the festival take place in this wised-up world. "Cinderella" does. So does "The Two Pigeons," in which a pair of lovers are separated—the boy strays—and are then reunited in a simultaneously painful and rapturous pas de deux. So do the comic ballets: "Les Patineurs," with its inventory of human types on a skating rink, and "A Wedding Bouquet," in which another collection of types—one getting old, one getting drunk, one getting married to a poor, silly girl he doesn't love—act badly at a provincial wedding. How much Ashton told us about life! But what was most striking to me in the festival was not the normal, life-describing Ashton but a different, less normal one, interested in ballet above all.

Much of the history of modern ballet is the history of adaptations of the standard classroom steps worked out by Marius Petipa and his staff at St. Petersburg's Imperial Ballet in the late nineteenth century. Michel Fokine softened the steps; Léonide Massine bent them to character study; Balanchine made them sleek and fast and modernist. But those people began studying ballet in childhood. The academic vocabulary was their past; they had to make their own future. Ashton's story was different. He, too, decided young that he would be a ballet dancer. (He made up his mind at the age of thirteen, at a performance by Anna Pavlova.) But his parents wanted no part of ballet for boys, and since Ashton was a girlish boy, they wanted it even less. It was not until he was twenty years old, and had spent a wretched adolescence in boarding school and various office jobs, that his brother Charlie threw up his hands and agreed to pay for ballet lessons for him.

Ashton shared many traits with the English novelists. Photograph by Arnold Newman.

GETTY IMAGES

With only one exception, that of his English colleague Antony Tudor, no other major ballet choreographer began studying the art at so late an age, and I believe this had a huge effect on Ashton. In his eyes, the academic ballet was in no way old hat, something that needed to be adapted. He had waited for it, longed for it, for years. And so, in his work, the classroom steps are treated like treasured possessions. He can't stop bringing them out, showing them to us. Temps de flèche, double saut de basque, grand battement en cloche—They are so beautiful, we hear him thinking. Can't he get just one more in? And he does. No old coot in "Enigma Variations" is so busy with his pipe that he can't perform a perfect arabesque, atop a bicycle. This is not to say that Ashton didn't modify the Russian lexicon. He did. He cut it up, elaborated on it. But always, beaming through his personal style, we see the academic steps—isolated, precise, displayed just as themselves, for themselves.

They are clearest, I guess, in his abstract ballets, of which he probably made fewer than he wanted to. (For most of his career he was the house choreographer to Ninette de Valois, the longtime director of the Royal Ballet, and she wanted him to stick to story ballets.) But the Lincoln Center celebration included two of his most beautiful plotless works, "Monotones" (1965-66) and "Scènes de Ballet" (1948). The latter, to a Stravinsky score of the same name, is a real challenge to those who think of Ashton as a dear old fellow. He said he was drawn to the music because it had a "cold, distant, uncompromising beauty." He made a ballet to match, all steps and architectonics. At one point the entire female ensemble, twelve dancers strong, turns its back to us and does a stately combination while facing upstage left. We can't see their faces, their "story." We only see their lovely backs and thighs, moving away from us, leaving us behind, and the sight is tremendous. Things don't have to be warm in order to be moving.

But I think the mileage that Ashton got from the academic vocabulary is most obvious in the narrative ballets, where the classroom steps, which have no fixed dramatic meaning, would seem irrelevant, even subversive, to the dramatic purpose, and aren't. When, in "Cinderella," the heroine goes to the ball and entrances the prince and his guests, she clinches her triumph by doing a grand manège, or circling of the stage. Around she goes, the full circuit of the space, in alternating sets of piqué and chaîné turns. Then she does the whole thing one more time, adding leaps. (When Alina Cojocaru uncorked this marvel in the first "Cinderella" of the Lincoln Center series, the people around me just about fell out of their seats.) What is the dramatic function of this double circle? How does it advance the story? Well, you could say that Cinderella is showing off, charmingly, or that she is coming into her own. But I think that the passage may have a blunter meaning. Animals in the wild urinate around the perimeter of their territory to tell other animals to keep out. Cinderella may be doing something like that, just more politely. A few minutes later, when she is alone with the prince, she performs the feat again—and again she does it twice—but this time the radius is smaller. She encircles only the prince. What was a necklace becomes a ring. She's going to marry him. She has decided.

No one that I have read has ever been able to explain why the general public likes ballet so much, and why, when other troupes are pulling in half a house, ballet companies are able to fill the seats. I can't explain it, either, nor, presumably, could Ashton. But he had the magic formula. The stories, the wisdom—that was one part. But the other part was just ballet, this set of apparently meaningless steps and poses that somehow—probably by seeming the noblest possible action of the body, the body that we basically are—ratify the story, make us believe in it. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

BABY SHOWER

"She Hate Me."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new Spike Lee movie, "She Hate Me," turns out to be at least two new Spike Lee movies rolled into one. In fact, the mélange of plots, subplots, reveries, gags, cartoons, dirty bits, and hissy fits points to a work that is structurally modelled less on the classic narratives of cinema than on, say, a portion of Russian salad. The first morsel of story, which seems chunky enough to fill an entire picture, concerns a fictitious pharmaceutical company by the name of Progeia. Its hot product is an AIDS vaccine, but the heat is not enough; as the movie starts, the vaccine has been denied a license by the F.D.A. A young black vice-president of the company, Jack Armstrong (Anthony Mackie), goes to see one of its senior scientists, Dr. Herman Schiller (David Bennent), who, assailed by the news, takes violent action. Progeia has blood on its hands.

These opening scenes are much more spooky and dislocated than any later occurrence. Lee is not at home in the corporate world, and he wishes the same unease upon his characters. Jack either drifts or hastens along the gray, metallic cool of the corridors, but never seems to settle; Margo Chadwick (Ellen Barkin), a senior executive, curses with such bounty and bile that you instantly sense a half-buried anger at herself; the C.E.O. is played by Woody Harrelson, who, while wishing to appear strong and sculpted, looks not as if he has climbed the corporate ladder but, being Woody Harrelson, as if he had been recently lowered from a spaceship; and, finally, there is David Bennent. It took me a minute to place the guy, then I got it: he was the man-child at the heart of Volker Schlöndorff's "The Tin Drum," and here, in his tiny white coat, he struck me as no less mad and sad.

According to Dr. Schiller, Progeia faltered because funds intended for research had been creamed off by the cats, or cat, at the top. What Lee is aiming at, in brief, is Enronland: drugs instead of energy, but the same aroma of rot. Heaven knows we need moviemakers to start rooting around in the comical cupidity of recent scandals; for a director like Lee, whose store of indignation is inexhaustible, the possibilities could hardly be riper, and, as the opening credits ripple with the face of George W. Bush on an imaginary three-dollar bill, everything is set for an angry movie. It is thus with bewilderment, and with more than a trickle of dismay, that one watches the story—and, with it, the promise of wrath—take such a peculiar turn. Jack Armstrong, having reported his employer to the financial authorities, is fired for having blown the whistle. We expect him to pursue the fight, instead of which he goes home to his apartment, hears the bell, opens the door, and discovers his former fiancée, Fatima (Kerry Washington), and her new lesbian Latina lover, Alex (Dania Ramirez), who stroll in and request that Jack impregnate both of them, for the sum of five thousand dollars each. Say what?

Anthony Mackie, Dania Ramirez, and Kerry Washington in Spike Lee's new movie.

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

I would claim that the rest of "She Hate Me" comes across as a withering investigation of American mores, were it not for a lingering suspicion that what we have here is a major filmmaker getting his minor rocks off. Jack needs the money, his broody ex needs the sperm, and as for Spike Lee, I think he just feels the need. So our hero, valiantly breaching the fortress of Fatima's lingerie, not only does the job but does it so well that she passes him on to her envious friends. Before we know it, his threshold is awash with lesbians, all of whom have sickened of adoption agencies or anonymous donors, and each of whom is prepared to pay top dollar. The director even gets to arrange a montage of women—ranging from the Jewish to the Asian-American, from the mousy to the martially butch, from the beast to the blonde—making hay with the increasingly exhausted Jack. The giveaway, in almost every case, is that the women appear to have a high old time, releasing a succession of hetero howls, and the implication is that with the right motive, and the right man, lesbians could be guided back to the straight and narrow. Maybe she hate me, but, hey, she love it really.

This is the sheerest male fantasy, and it reinforces the sense that Lee, whose sensitivity to color and shade, within his compositions, remains unimpaired, is far less delicate when he turns to broader emotional shadings—to lives beyond the ambit of his hero.

This was not always the case; few directors have attempted the kind of fraying social patchwork that Lee stitched together for "Do the Right Thing," and his fans could be forgiven a rueful sigh as they watch John Turturro, who fit so neatly into the earlier picture, looking so misplaced in the new one. He plays a Mafia don, whose ethereal daughter is among Jack's contented clients. She is played by Monica Bellucci, no less, and, if there's one thing we can say for sure about Ms. Bellucci, it's that in no configuration of the universe could she ever have been spawned by John Turturro. All this strikes me as dabbling, or game-playing, on the part of Lee. He is no more concerned with the realities of organized crime than he is with the child-bearing dilemmas of gay professionals. He just wants to stir things up, scattering his visual ardor with as much abandon as Jack demonstrates in casting his seed.

Defenders of this movie will argue that the zip and crackle of Lee's technique are themselves worth the price of a ticket; that only with such freakish energy can a director hope to meet the outrages visited upon the body politic; and that it takes somebody of Lee's nerve to raise one of the most grubby of racial prejudices—the belief that African-American men are prodigal with their paternity—and then not merely dramatize it but defend it. And defend it Lee does. The movie closes, with undisguised benignity, on a scene of multi-ethnic bliss, as a throng of lesbians cuddle their mini-Jacks. More touching still is the sequence back at Jack's house, in which he kisses first Fatima, who is holding a new baby, and then, after a hilariously thoughtful pause, the lovely Alex, who is also holding her baby, and who, having hitherto scorned Jack as the merest fertilizer, has now found room for him in her heart. So *that's* the future for American family values: the sentimental threesome. It sounds a funky option, though whether it will survive a broken night of double infant pain—one croup, one colic—I would not care to say.

And what, you may ask, has any of this to do with Progeia? The only connection I can glimpse is that a possible cure for AIDS, thwarted by greed, is swiftly followed by a long advertisement for unprotected sex with multiple partners. Am I alone in finding the logic of this a mite unfortunate? The film does try to wrestle the various components into place, as Jack is framed by his former bosses, hauled before a Senate committee, publicly quizzed about his career as a stud, and finally acquitted, to the squeals and whoops of his supporters. But even the most charitable viewer may be forced to concede that, in this instance, the case of Lee vs. America should be dismissed for lack of evidence. In the eyes of the director, Jack's truth-telling was threatened and censored because he was black; the rest of us, however, can hardly remember what the truth consisted of in the first place—come on, it was more than two hours ago.

"She Hate Me" must therefore count as an opportunity lost. Lee is too much of a live wire to maintain the kind of attack that Michael Mann, for instance, launched against corporate devilry in "The Insider," and Anthony Mackie, taking his first leading role, as Jack, cannot hope to generate the steady incandescence that Denzel Washington brought to "Malcolm X." Only once does everything click, when Mackie wanders through Times Square, tracked by a handheld camera, and we see his suit and tie, the protective garb of the urban predator, drop away in a single cut, to be replaced by a shapeless coat and a squashy hat. Inside of a minute, the movie has dressed him down (listen for the sarcastic suavity of a saxophone in the background), and we are reminded of the dire deceleration with which those in the money, white as well as black, can tumble into the ranks of the dispossessed.

How can a director capable of such grace turn around and crack us over the head with a paranoid bad dream? But here it is: a sudden, scuzzy flashback to, of all things, the Watergate break-in—a reminder that Frank Wills, the black security guard who first noted the entrance of the thieves, was discarded by society for his pains. Jack, before the Senate committee, claims spiritual fellowship with Wills—although, from where I was sitting, Jack's moment in the limelight looked fairly triumphant. Maybe he was still relishing the animated sequence in which his noble features, alternating between grin and grimace, are—wait for it—superimposed upon a crowd of eager sperm, wiggling toward those high-paying ovaries. And, when they get there, the eggs, too, are smiling with delight: see the rapture on Monica Bellucci's face at the instant of conception. How strange to reflect that, while so many parties—lesbians, Bush supporters, AIDS sufferers—may find cause for complaint in "She Hate Me," the one institution that may consider itself vindicated is the Roman Catholic Church. ♦

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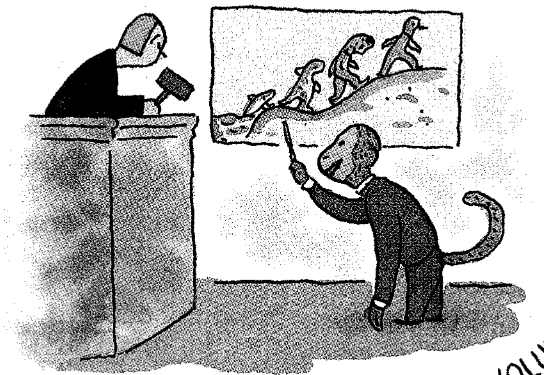

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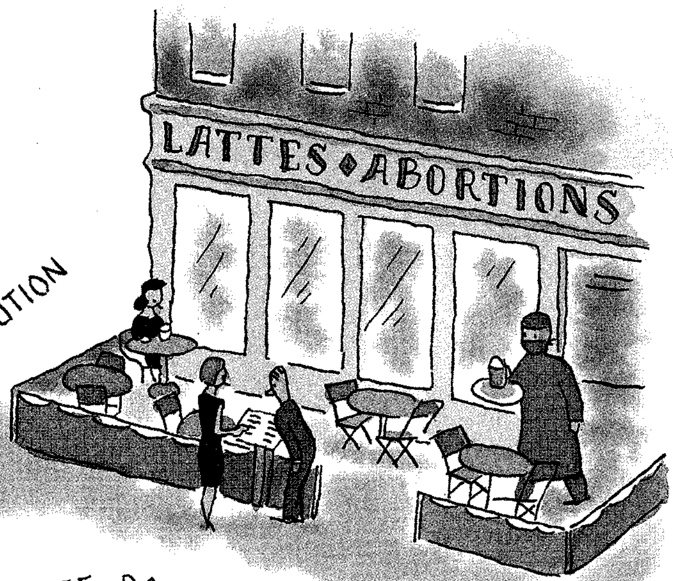
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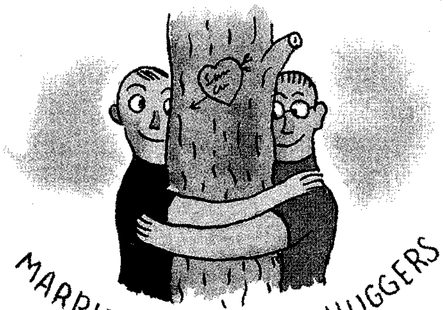

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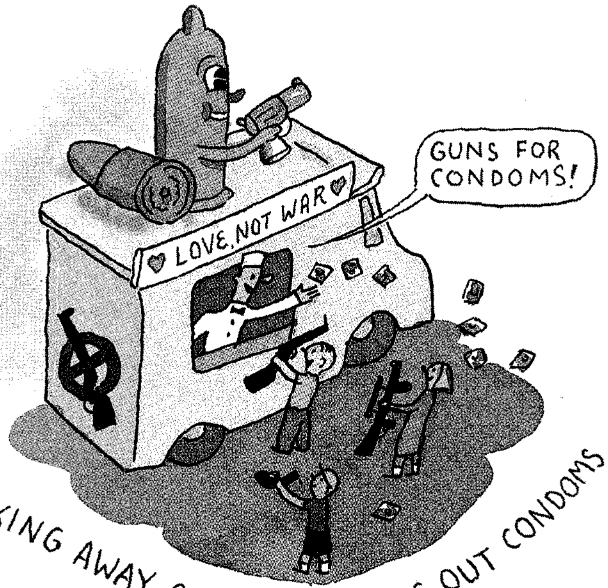
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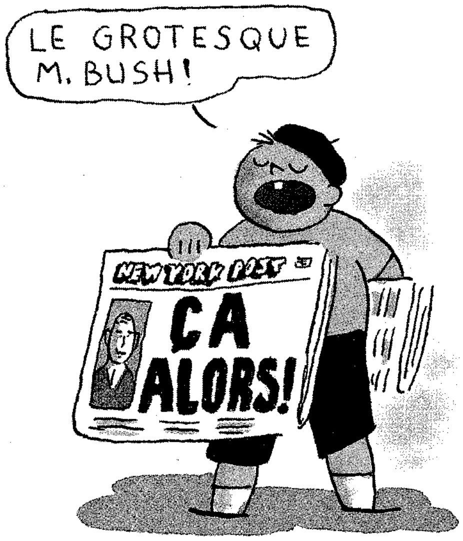
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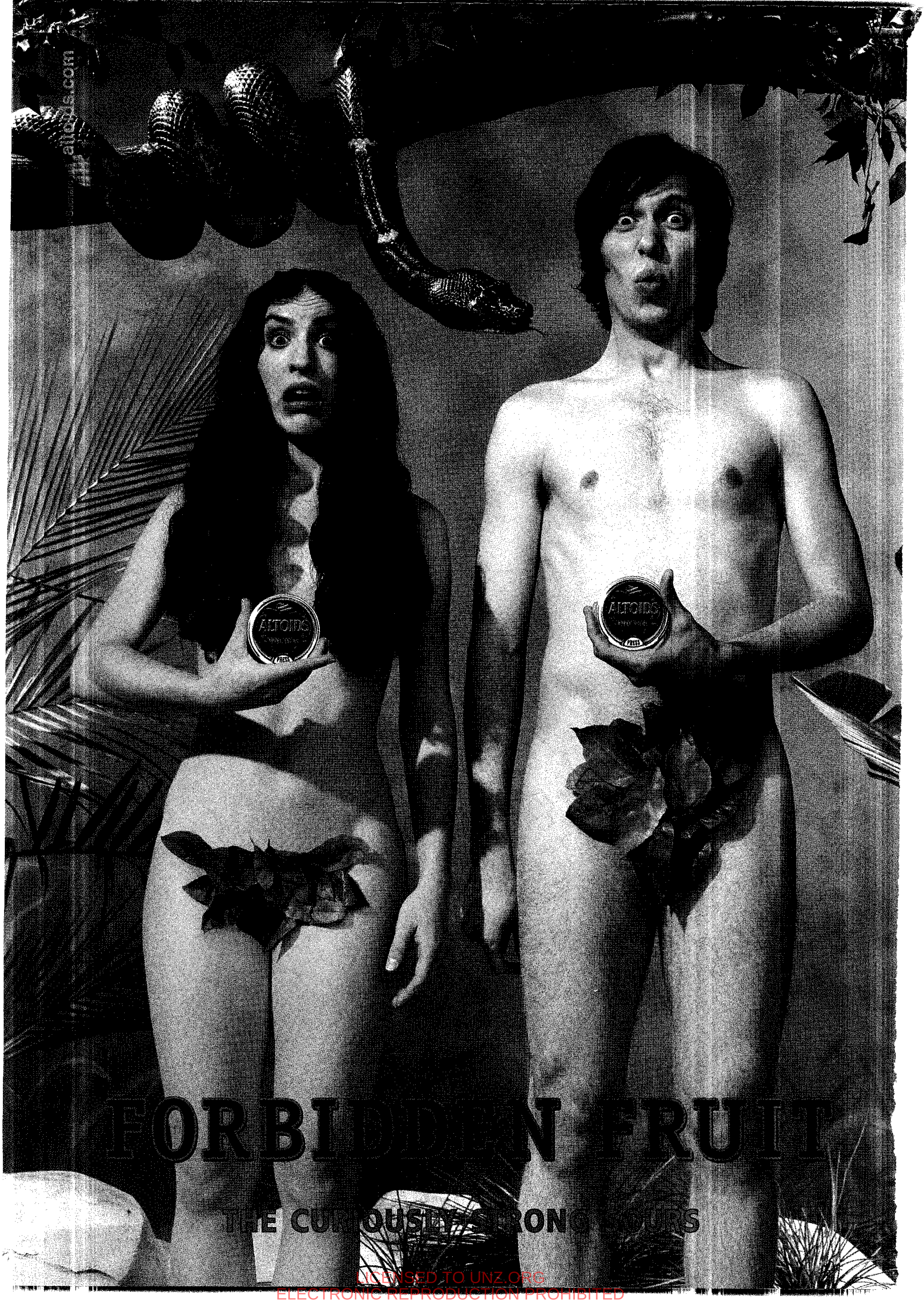
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